Captured



ON THE ROAD IN FRANCE

The Author, Herman Huffer, Mary Darby, and Nigger, with the Château de Blois unit.

BESSY MYERS

Captured

MY EXPERIENCES AS AN AMBULANCE DRIVER AND AS A PRISONER OF THE NAZIS

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To
MY PARENTS
TO MARY DARBY
AND
TO HERMAN HUFFER

Contents

PAGE
Foreword ix

PART I: DIARY

CHAPTER
1. France in Flight 1
2. Prisoners of War 18
3. L'Hôpital Militaire, Soissons 44
4. The Snake in the Grass 79

PART II: PRISON AND ESCAPE

5. Cherche-Midi: My Diary Seized 109
6. Cherche-Midi: Solitary Confinement 147
7. Cherche-Midi: Cross-examination 185
8. Fresnes Prison 212
9. "A German City" 235
10. Vichy 256
11. Marseille 270
12. En Route for Home 288

Foreword

THIS is the story of my adventures as a driver in the Château de Blois Ambulance Corps when it was caught up in the maelstrom in France which followed those fateful days in the late spring of 1940.

With the British Army miraculously rescued from the beaches at Dunkirk, the victorious German armored divisions were being massed for the attack which was to cause the collapse of France and render two million French soldiers prisoners of war.

Of the military events which began when the German forces, advancing so unexpectedly through the Ardennes, smashed the French defences at Sedan and ended with the surrender at Compiègne, I do not attempt to deal. At the time, as a member of a small unit hopelessly engulfed in the French retreat, I knew little of the trend of events so breathlessly watched by the world outside. My unit joined the Sixth French Army at Crouy-sur-Marne on the 4th of June; the Germans struck at dawn the following day along most of the front, from the coast at Abbeville along the Somme and Aisne Valleys to the Maginot Line at Sedan.

I fell into German hands on the 13th of June at Nogent-sur-Seine, and then began the incredible hundred days in which I was by turn prisoner of war in a French military hospital, working under German orders, imprisoned in the

Cherche-Midi, the notorious military prison in Paris, and refugee in German-occupied France.

I was extremely lucky; I managed to get back to England. There are many to follow, and for that reason it is impossible now to give any details of some of the route we covered.

Circumstances of the war have forced me to refer to some people by assumed names, but that is all I have changed; the characters themselves, the lives they lead, and the manner in which I met them are accurately described.

My diary begins at the English Convent, Neuilly, the Paris headquarters of the Mechanized Transport Corps to which I was attached. Kruger is one of my companions, Marjorie Juta. I found that she had written a biography of Kruger and asked if she minded my calling her by that name. Since she did not, I so refer to her in my diary. Mr. Huffer is Herman Huffer, Jr., an American in charge of an ambulance unit. Darby is Mary Darby who had come over to France with me in May, 1940.

PART I: DIARY

1

France in Flight

SATURDAY, JUNE 8TH, 1940

See Kruger at breakfast: she says Mr. Huffer will be calling for us in the ambulance some time this morning and doesn't think I'll have time to go to the bank. Hang around the convent. Run into Kruger again, who tells me she has been speaking to Mr. Huffer on the 'phone: if I jump to it I'll have time to go to the bank after all. Jump into a taxi and go to the bank in the Place Vendôme, draw £20, and buy a watch; get back to the convent in three-quarters of an hour.

See Mrs. Sherrington, our quartermaster (a perfect dear), and ask her if I should take *all* my money with me. She says yes, as no one knows how long we shall be away. Stuff it in my chastity belt.[1]

Huffer and Lloyd Bennet arrive. Huffer takes us to lunch at the Pavillon Royal in the Bois de Boulogne. We lunch under the trees—*très chic* and *très gai.* Masses of uniforms and smart women. Curious to think we are off to the front in a few minutes—and that it will take us only about an hour and a half to get there in the ambulance.

It's a very well-equipped Ford ambulance. Huffer drives, and Kruger sits in front with him and his dog Nigger. Kruger points out to me the statue of General Gallieni commemorating

[1] A purse worn under the skirt.

his defense of Paris during the last war. It's a rather lovely statue, built by the side of the road.

Every one except me sees bombs being dropped on the railway-lines.

Arrive at Crouy-sur-Marne. Find Darby and the rest as busy as bees repacking the ambulances. Apparently we have to evacuate at once to Villiers-sur-Marne. This place is not very far away.

At Villiers we find a huge hospital built in various sections dotted about a large wood. We have dinner in a dining-cum-dressing-clearing-station with the wounded, who have just been brought from the front. Some of them are bad stretcher cases with appalling wounds, which have not yet had any dressings whatsoever. There is plenty of blood about, but little food.

We go to bed early, and are called at 3 A.M. We have been ordered to evacuate to Pavant. At last our convoy gets started. None of us take any wounded except Angus; her ambulance was loaded with them, and she was told to take them to Montmirail.

SUNDAY, JUNE 9TH

We go down to the village about six and find a café; Huffer scrounges some breakfast for us, and we are joined by *les médecins*—Joli, le Maire, and le Nègre—and several nurses. Ask Darby who's who, and what's what—and why.

Says she is not sure—as she's only been in the Château de Blois unit for a few days, and they seem to do nothing but evacuate. Most of the time is spent in getting to some place—and then leaving it for another. She thinks that *les médecins* Joli, le Maire, and le Nègre are attached to us—or we to them—and that they are experts on oxygen treatment. She can't make

out much of all the various nurses; knows the five Château de Blois ambulances are attached to the field ambulance section, under the command of the Sixth French Army. Ask what all the "*dix-neuvième*" train (which I hear them referring to) is about. Darby says it's more or less our postal section, and what all the doctors, nurses, we, cooks, stretcher-bearers, etc., boil down to is a first surgical field ambulance unit which treats wounded behind the front lines; we are supposed to be very mobile.

We spend the morning on the roadside near the ambulances—waiting for orders.

We have a lovely view over the tiny village of Pavant; we can see for miles down the valley, where the Marne curls and twists. It's a glorious hot sunny day, and we bask in the sunshine in a field full of buttercups, daisies, and cows. If it were not for the hospital we left last night and a poilu at the bottom of the hill it would be almost impossible to realize that there is a war on, and not very far from us. The country looks peaceful; there is no one about. Except for the noise of the bees humming, silence reigns—and yet the poilu at the bottom of the hill told us he thinks the Germans are only fifteen kilometers away. *C'est incroyable!* He can't be right; if they were surely we should hear gunfire.

It gets hotter and hotter; we still have no orders. Huffer says we shall remain by the roadside till four o'clock at least.

On the way back to the ambulances I have a brainwave and ask Huffer if I can go down to the river and bathe; and would it matter my not having a bathing dress? Huffer says as long as I'm back by four o'clock I can do what I like. Darby and I head through a wood, down the side of a hill to the Marne.

We come out on to a road which is guarded by a poilu. He

says we can go no farther, as he may have orders at any minute to blow up the bridge opposite us. If we cross the fields we can bathe farther down the Marne.



MAP OF FRANCE SHOWING THE PRINCIPAL PLACES MENTIONED BY THE AUTHOR

We are just off when the village *préfet* asks where we are going to. The poilu explains; the *préfet* goes off the *deep end*, threatens to report the poilu to his captain, etc., etc., *and* etc. The poilu and the *préfet* give their opinions of each other very pithily, and when I can get a word in edgewise I tell the

préfet that it's of no importance whether we swim or not. Far be it from us to cause all this bother. The *préfet* calms down, tells us several people have been drowned in the river recently—and ends up by asking Darby and me to have a glass of cider in his cottage.

Really he is a dear old man, and has some very good cider; we sit yarning away. I remark that on such a heavenly day it is a pity one can not swim in the river. The *préfet* says, "*Mais alors*," and tells us to keep away from the bridge, and ends up by lending us each a towel.

We walk along the river and swim and bask in the sun, and I am as pleased as pleased, as I now can say I've swum the Marne. A German plane flies low overhead, and Darby goes all modest, wondering if the crew can see us. Don't think it matters much if they do.

Go back to the *préfet's* cottage to return the towels and find the poor old man in tears. Three-quarters of an hour ago he received orders to have Pavant evacuated immediately. Darby and I realize there will be a pretty good crowd on the road, and say we must get back to our ambulances at once. We ask the *préfet* why he is not packing up to go. He says he is remaining to the last, as he doesn't think the Germans will do anything to an old man. He gives us some more cider, kisses us both on each cheek, and wishes us *bon voyage*.

The village streets look unreal. People have left doors and windows open, the streets are littered with objects discarded at the last moment, and there is a general appearance of desolation. The *préfet* says, "*Mais voilà! C'est la guerre.*"

Darby and I scramble up the hill and through the wood at top speed. We come out on to the road on which we think we left our ambulances—and have a *shock*. To begin with we do

not recognize the road at all, and it is packed, jammed, jammed, packed, with soldiers, sheep, carts, refugees, cows, military cars, and soldiers on motor-cycles—soldiers, soldiers, soldiers, a never-ending stream of them, some in lorries, trying to force a way through this jammed congestion of humanity and animals. Tell Darby if we ever find our ambulances in this *mélange* it will be a miracle. She agrees.

Ask soldier after soldier if they have seen any *ambulance américaine*. They all say no. At last one officer says he saw some *ambulances américaines* down in the village of Pavant about an hour ago waiting to cross the bridge; if we want to catch them "*venez vite*," as the bridge will be blown up. We scramble into his car, and he takes us down to the village—which is a seething mass of lorries rushing this way and that. Every one seems to be in desperate haste.

Our officer takes us along a road which leads to the bridge, where the *ambulances américaines* were last seen. A soldier stops us; this road can no longer be used. The bridge has not yet been blown up; he has just passed there, but there was no sign of any *ambulance américaine*. Our officer says he must go on his way. Darby and I thank him for his help, get out of his car, and survey the situation.

It looks very much as though our ambulances have crossed the bridge—well, that's that. Thank goodness I drew £20 yesterday and have it on me. We shall have to get back to Paris, and we do not consider we shall be at all popular with the Château de Blois crowd—or, for that matter, with the H.Q. in Paris—when we arrive there. The only thing to do now is to have one more look along the road where we left the cars. It is now five minutes past four.

We walk back to Pavant, where a lorry with innumerable soldiers jammed into it gives us a lift. It takes twenty minutes to thread our way in and out of the general *mélange* to the top of the hill; we turn a corner, and there, parked on the verge, are our ambulances.

Huffer slides away on our approach. We apologize to Kruger for being nearly half an hour late. She, in a few well-chosen words, tells us exactly what she thinks of us, and adds that they had orders to leave an hour ago for Rebais. Now with the road in this condition it will be a hopeless job to get a move on, and thanks to us, we shall have to wait till the refugees get on a bit and the road becomes less congested. Kruger can not imagine, in times like these, how two people with a grain of common sense could think of being completely out of touch for over two hours. However, she tells us she has said all she has to say on the subject, and that it need not be referred to again. Darby and I are sorry we have annoyed Kruger. She is a good sport and nice to work for.

Huffer, who has now slid back, announces that he and le Maire are going to try and make Villiers-sur-Marne before the bridges are blown up, and fetch some oxygen cylinders which have been left there. He thinks they will be back in an hour.

Darby and I sit on the roadside. I'm now definitely the Bad Lass of the party, and it wouldn't surprise me if Darby were not a good runner-up. So much for our "Battle of the Marne." We watch the retreat passing us, and it is a sorry sight. Soldiers, soldiers, soldiers, mixed up with captains and colonels—and all dead beat. Some of them tell us they have been on the road three or four days. There is no attempt at organization—all ranks and regiments are mixed up together. They are not marching in any sort of order, hundreds upon hundreds of

them straggling along the road, wending their way through animals, carts, and refugees. And never do I see a soldier carrying a rifle. Can't imagine what they have done with them; think that the rifles must have been put into lorries, which are bringing them up in the rear.

Tell Darby I've never seen a rout—but if this isn't one I should like to know what it is. I can not think why they don't make a stand here. Surely this high, wooded hill could command the entire valley for miles—and I don't see how the Germans could cross the Marne here at all, if only the soldiers would put just a few guns into the wood *and* fire them. And where are the guns? Like the rifles, they are conspicuous by their absence.

A poor little dog has been running up and down this part of the road for the last half-hour, looking for his owners. I catch him as he dashes by again, and give him to some soldiers passing in a lorry—they say they'll look after him.

Four wagonloads of soldiers stop and drive into a clearing in the woods, just off the road. Am thrilled—perhaps a stand will be made here after all. Ask the soldiers what is happening; they reply they don't know, but they and their horses are tired so they are sleeping here for to-night. I suppose there is some one in command somewhere.

Huffer and le Maire return. The road is slightly less congested now and we start off for Rebais. We stop by a wayside farm, have coffee and delicious omelettes served in the farmyard—all very rural and pleasant.

In an orchard opposite, hundreds of refugees from Pavant and roundabout have parked for the night. I have seen refugees on various stages of their journeys, but never before at their first stage, when they pack up and leave their homes, and have

their first rest for the night. The whole thing is tragic; very much doubt if many of them will find even a cowshed to sleep in when they get south of Paris.

We arrive in Rebais in the pitch dark. The *préfet* finds us all billets. Darby and I are thankful to share a bed; it's a grim little room, in rather a dirty cottage. We are told to meet at the local hotel for breakfast at eight o'clock.

MONDAY, JUNE 10TH

Sit around all morning waiting for orders—and do nothing.

Huffer has asked for better billets for us all. He gives Darby and me a billeting chit—we find the house. It is scrupulously clean, and the charming old woman who owns it can't do enough for us.

More and more soldiers stream past the house—still without rifles. They are tired, hot, and thirsty. We chat to them while the old lady gives them water to drink. They say they have to go ten kilometers farther on. We ask them if they know where the stand will be made. They shrug their shoulders and say they know nothing.

We have dinner with our nurses in the hospital, and go to bed early. Darby and I each have a delightful room with very comfortable beds. Wonder when we shall see the like of these again—or such a dear old lady.

TUESDAY, JUNE 11TH

Breakfast at eight o'clock with our nurses in the hotel, as the hospital was evacuated during the night. We receive orders to go to the Château Minimes at Beton-Bazoches—which is a few kilometers from Provins. We are told that the château is a dressing station for the wounded from the front.

Arrive at the Château Minimes—a huge, rambling, very old-fashioned place, surrounded by woods. The place is seething with soldiers, doctors, nurses, and ambulance drivers of all nationalities: Dutch, Swedes, Norwegians, Frenchmen, Cubans, and two Englishmen. The soldiers cook lunch in a field kitchen, and we have ours with the nurses, standing in a garage. Read all the afternoon in our ambulances. Dinner. Sleep on stretchers with the nurses in the officers' dining-room. No water or (usable) lavatories in the château at all.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12TH

Wash in a stream in the woods; it's pouring with rain and it's cold. Hang about all morning, playing patience with Darby some of the time. We've still received no orders. After lunch play bridge with some of the ambulance drivers in the garage. They're nice lads. Practically no supper; something went wrong.

At last some wounded have arrived from the front for their first treatment and dressings; I am told to do night duty with Huffer, and to take the wounded on to the hospital at Provins, which is near-by.

Sit expectantly in Huffer's ambulance for ages, but nothing happens. He suggests I sleep on a stretcher inside, and he'll sleep in front; when the wounded are ready we shall be called. Just off to sleep when Huffer bangs on the door—we are wanted at once. The wounded are put in, and I'm given their clothes, papers, and medical reports. Huffer drives, and off we go into the pitch black night, without lights of any kind (they are entirely forbidden). Although Provins is only a few kilometers away, it takes us over an hour of strained, painful crawling along the road to get there. Twice we avoid by a

hair's-breadth running into refugees traveling in their carts.

Deposit the wounded in the hospital, and crawl back to the château. Just get off to sleep again when Huffer wakes me for our next load of wounded.

There is a man with a very bad head wound; the bandages are dripping blood, as he has just had a hemorrhage. The doctor doubts if he will live. We have another awful journey to the hospital at Provins. I drive back. The dawn is breaking, and it is much more pleasant. Huffer again arranges a stretcher for me in the back of the ambulance. He goes in front, and this time we snatch a couple of hours' sleep.

THURSDAY, JUNE 13TH

Huffer and I wake just before eight and find it's too late to have any breakfast. Kruger tells me that last night rooms were fixed up for us in the château—to find a stretcher and get some sleep. Find a room and am just about to lie down when Darby rushes in and says, "Pack your knapsack *rapidement*. The château is to be evacuated immediately." We are to go to Provins, to evacuate the wounded to the hospital at Sens.

It is decided that Huffer, Angus, and Heard will take the oxygen cylinders and all our suitcases to Saint-Valérien, which is to be our new H.Q., and may Saint-Valérien remain our H.Q. for some time. Getting tired of this perpetual going and evacuating, evacuating and going; it's depressing. Wonder when a stand will be made, and if Paris will fall. I never saw any lines or trenches from Paris to here, and although they managed to save Paris in the last war, wonder whether they can repeat the miracle again. What I should like to know is *where* they will make a stand. I've driven down to Angoulême twice recently, and even on that side of France I've seen no

signs of any preparation for a line of defense—they certainly can not attack.

Kruger and Lloyd Bennet, Otto alone, Darby and I, go off in the ambulances, and on arrival at Provins join a queue of about sixty others waiting outside the hospital. While waiting we see a pilot make a parachute landing near the hospital—great excitement among the villagers, who dash off to find him. At last our turn comes to collect our load of wounded. A doctor calls me, says the pilot who has just made a parachute landing is an R.A.F. chap, and asks me to interpret for him. Dash into hospital, find the pilot, who wants to know if he can have his leg dressed—it's not a bad wound—and if he can get in touch with an R.A.F. base at once. He tells us he was shot down over Montmirail after fighting two Messerschmitts, one of which he thinks he got down. Doctors take him off to have his leg seen to.

The road from Provins to Sens *via* Bray is absolutely packed with usual crowd—soldiers, refugees, cattle, sheep, carts—complete *battle* to get through to Sens. It is a large military hospital; our wounded are unloaded.

An awfully nice poilu starts chatting to me, and fetches me a bottle of champagne. Have slight supper in the nurses' mess, and we stand by our ambulances. Open the bottle of champagne and am in the act of pouring out glasses when Kruger tells us we have to return to Provins at once—to bring the remaining wounded down here. Swallow my glass of champagne—accidentally upset Darby's over her. She's furious. I'm annoyed, for while scrambling into the ambulance lose the cork of the bottle, which Darby tries to keep upright. Have a weary drive back in the semi-dark; it's pitch dark by the time we arrive in Provins.

Drs. le Nègre and le Maire very pleased to see us, and say we are the only ambulances to return. While getting out of the ambulance Darby knocks the bottle of champagne into the gutter. Obviously the bottle was pre-fated *not* to be drunk. Le Maire and le Nègre take us to a *bistro*. The busy little town of Provins was entirely evacuated during the afternoon. We drink some cognac and eat some biscuits in the *bistro*.

See the doctor who gave Huffer and me the stretcher case with head hemorrhage last night. Ask him how the man is. The doctor shrugs his shoulders, says the man is still alive and has been evacuated from here to Sens. Personally don't think the man has a chance if he doesn't get a few days' quiet. Can't think why they don't send these bad cases miles south of Paris. What is the point of keeping them around here—where nothing seems to happen except evacuation?

Three more R.A.F. men have been brought into Provins hospital this afternoon—one wounded. They say the Germans are in the woods of the Château Minimes.

Kruger tells Darby and me that there are enough ambulances to take the wounded to Sens, and we had better go straight to H.Q. at Saint-Valérien. Le Maire asks us to stay put; he wants us to take one *grand blessé* and two *semi*. Our wounded are put in; one of the nurses, whose name I never learn, but who is always called Mademoiselle, comes in front with us. See various ambulances and people in the dark—there is a lot of shouting to find out who's who—we are off. Darby drives, and we follow Kruger. After twenty-four hours of more or less continuous driving feel very sleepy and doze off—to be waked up by the word "Halt!" I open my eyes to find I am gazing at a German soldier.

He waves us on, and a few yards farther we come out of

the wood and are parked by German soldiers beside the ambulances which were in front of us, alongside a petrol pump by the side of the road. So much for evacuating the wounded to Sens—we are now prisoners of war. Darby and Mademoiselle make no comments whatsoever. I light a cigarette. A German soldier by signs makes me understand I must throw my cigarette away. The three of us continue to sit in silence (a change for Mademoiselle, who generally can't cease talking). The German voices are low and guttural; it is still dark, and about 1 A.M. Our *grand blessé* asks through the glass window why we have stopped and what language is being spoken. Mademoiselle says promptly that we have stopped to collect the ambulances together, and she doesn't know what language is being spoken. We sit for a while, and I doze off.

Am waked this time by a most tremendous noise. Kruger appears with her tin helmet on, and says we must all put ours on and lie on our stomachs on the grass. The sky is lit up—three more tremendous noises break the stillness of the night —silence once more; we get back into our ambulances, and Kruger appears with a bottle of cognac, which is just my cup of tea. She tells us it wasn't the French guns going off, but the Germans blowing up a bridge not a hundred yards away. Feel utterly fed up.

FRIDAY, JUNE 14TH

At dawn see a German major wandering about; several more ambulances have joined us. We are sent off in convoy with an armed motor-cyclist fore and aft. As we start, notice that Otto is with Lloyd Bennet and le Maire, Kruger with le Nègre, and Joli is with one of the nurses who has her own little car.

Huffer has nicknamed that nurse "Madame la P——." Mademoiselle remains with Darby and me.

We go off in the direction of Saint-Quentin along the Villenauxe-Sézanne road. The road is packed with the German mechanized Army—find out afterwards it's a famous Panzer division. Endless tanks, armored cars, etc. German despatch-riders on motor-cycles racing all over the place giving the positions of the advanced troops, which German officers check up on their maps. The ambulance convoy is told to park on the side of the road to give freer passage for the guns.

For a while I watch the Panzer divisions as they pass; a seemingly endless column, small whippet tanks, cruiser tanks, and the massive land ironclads for all the world like great battleships with their attendant flotillas.

Heads covered with the German steel helmet stick out of the turrets, and the skies are scanned for the approach of enemy aircraft. From all the tanks machine-guns protrude but from the heavier ones I see the bigger barrels of shell-firing guns as well.

Inexorable, this brutal-looking force trundles its way along the road. I hear nothing but the clank and grind of the caterpillars and the roar of motor-cycle exhausts as German N.C.O.'s pass up and down the column.

In my mind for a moment I people the road with those great crowds of refugees who elsewhere in France and Belgium have stood in the path of just such tanks as these. I see the wild desperate rush for the ditches, the panic, the screams as the brutal German machine drives on, leaving what it will in its tracks.

I look at the faces of the men in the turrets, young, healthy-looking, and sometimes smiling, and I wonder at a system that can make such men, or any men, perpetrators of such acts.

Notice some precious French Army tanks packed up and ditched on the side of the road. Oh! la Belle France, is this *the end?* What a sad thought. Realize I'm in the midst of a catastrophe. . . . France, what can your allies do?

Kruger has some news—she thinks it highly probable we shall be sent to Geneva and home *via* the International Red Cross. Am not really very thrilled, as I can not believe the International Red Cross will be able to help us very much in a situation like this, and I should think, in any case, it will be a long, long time before we ever reach Switzerland. However, it's a much better thought than thinking of all the concentration and internment camps which will soon be springing up around here.

A Dutchman—one of the ambulance drivers whom I remember seeing at the Château Minimes—suddenly appears. He is very hopeful that we shall all be sent to Switzerland. Good.

The Panzer division has passed, the ambulance convoy starts again with its escort of motor-cyclists. We wend our way onward and get mixed up with hundreds of sheep which are loose on the road and entirely blocking it. If it weren't so pathetic it would be funny. Whether with the French or the Germans we seem fated to drive our ambulances through cattle. The German cyclists try to get the sheep off the road into the fields.

We ask Mademoiselle whether there is anything we can do for our wounded. Poor devils, they have been with us and without attention for a good many hours now. Mademoiselle says she has no first-aid equipment with her; there is nothing to be done. The bleating of the sheep makes me doze off again. I wake up when Darby stops at some crossroads. She says that a motor-cyclist has gone ahead after having told her to halt

here, but that an ambulance, she thinks one of ours, has just dashed past and turned to the right. Look to the right and see a signpost marked Provins. The next second Kruger dashes past us with le Nègre—they also turn to the right. Darby says, "What on earth are they doing?" I yell, "*Follow!* They are *fout'*-ing *le camp*."[2]

Darby switches on, starts up, and swings to the right—it's a dead straight road for some way. See Kruger's ambulance not far ahead of us, but the distance soon widens. It *would* be our luck to be driving the one ambulance which for the last two days has been working on only four of its six cylinders. Remember telling Huffer, and he told his *maréchal des logis* to attend to it, but he obviously hasn't. She was running pretty badly last night, and now we can only chug along. Darby says she can't get an ounce more speed out of the engine. Kruger is doing between fifty and sixty miles per hour and disappears out of sight. We can only do just under thirty.

See German soldiers in the fields on either side of the road just in front of us. They have rows and rows of small guns—stretched away out, on either side of the fields; the line doesn't look very deep, about a hundred yards. Tell Darby if we could only get some speed up we could make it. The others must have done it; they are not in sight. Darby driving like a fury, but there's nothing to be done. We chug along the road between the lines of German soldiers. *Just* as we have passed them we hear, "Halt!"

[2] *Fout' le camp:* do a bunk.

2

Prisoners of War

Do NOT BLAME Darby for obeying the command, for we are two yards in front of their first line of guns and have our wounded with us. But can't help wondering, as the German soldiers indicate to Darby to drive the ambulance off the road, and wave us to park in front of the guns, what would have happened if she had continued. Don't honestly think it makes much odds—don't think the Germans would have opened fire, but don't think we had a chance in that slow ambulance anyway.

Several soldiers rush up to us and tell us to get out at once. As we do so several officers dash down the road and simply gape at us.

Notice they are wearing Iron Crosses with their tunics fairly plastered with ribbon decorations. Madame la P——, with Joli, comes tearing down the road in her little car, followed by several ambulances; they are all halted—hurriedly.

Ambulances told to go on to the side of the road, and an officer tells us in fluent French that there may be a skirmish—we must lie down behind the guns or in the ditch alongside the road. Choose the ditch; have absolutely no urge to lie behind a gun while a German is firing it at a Frenchman.

Nothing is happening yet; look round and survey the situation. It suddenly dawns on me that our ambulance is in the

field only two yards away from the German guns and between the two lines of fire. Our wounded don't know where they are; they can't get out. Tell a passing officer in French that our ambulance must be moved at once, as there are three wounded inside. He obviously doesn't understand a word of what I am saying.

Run down the road to the ambulance and have just started up the engine when two soldiers make a dive for me. One, who has a wound in the face which is bleeding, knocks me on the chin, the other takes away the ignition key; they pull me out of the ambulance, and I grab my knapsack, gas-mask, and tin helmet. Presumably they think I was trying to *fout' le camp*, for the one who has got the ignition key pulls me toward the road. I pull myself away, run to the back of the ambulance, open the door, and tell the wounded to get out.

The German soldiers come after me, and when they see the *semi-blessés* trying to get down they help them out. The *semi-blessés* can't possibly take out the stretcher case by themselves—it takes four men.

We are now fairly surrounded by soldiers; feel it's no use arguing further. We are led back to the road. An officer asks me in good English to realize I am now under German Army orders and to follow him. Do so down the road. He points to a spot in the ditch and tells me to sit there.

Still nothing happens. After three or four minutes several puffs go off from the guns, down the far ends of the fields. They are small puffs, and after the tremendous noises of last night one could almost say they were too quiet to be heard. Just a little smoke twirling about, that's all. There is no answering fire. Presumably at some sign which I didn't see the skirmish is considered over. All the soldiers get up from their

guns, and officers walk up and down the road. Get up and stretch my legs too. Find Darby.

We are simply *amazed* at the way in which the soldiers now pop up from their guns, like rabbits out of their holes, and in relays of about twenty come on to the road and snap us with their cameras. Apparently every German soldier carries a camera on him as part of his equipment.

An officer comes up wearing an Iron Cross, and says very sarcastically, "You can see for yourselves we are not barbarians, but when you return to England you will no doubt confirm all the atrocity stories which England accuses us of." Tell him I've only just been made a prisoner of war, but I've already been hit on the jaw. He starts arguing, and, as he is an odious type anyway, I get out of the range of his tongue, and walk up and down the road. Various officers come up and chat with us, either in English or in French. The soldiers and several officers continue to snap us. There must be at least three or four hundred soldiers in the fields, and by now each one seems to have snapped Darby and me three or four times.

Madame la P—— continues to argue about her legal status as a member of the Croix Rouge; she also seems to think she ought to be allowed to keep her car, which is her own personal property. Darby and I are told to get into our ambulance. Tell them it's no good without the ignition key. Soldiers are sent off to find out who has got it; one, not the original one, ultimately gives it back to me.

As I don't think I shall need my gas-mask behind the German lines or, for that matter, that my tin helmet will be of much use to me, give them to soldiers as souvenirs. They are tremendously pleased; I hate carrying them around with me anyway.

Several motor-cyclists recently roared down the road toward Provins. Wonder if they have caught Kruger and Co., and whether the Germans now occupy Provins. Should think they must—all the civilians have gone, and we never saw any soldiers in the town.

Mademoiselle gets into the ambulance. She seems to be taking it all pretty placidly, and it must be worse for her than us; after all, it's her country which is being overrun by Germans.

Tell Darby I'll drive—no longer feel tired, and she was driving all last night. Follow the motor-cyclist back to the crossroads and on to the German Divisional H.Q. not four kilometers away. It's a very small village seething with soldiers; *no* French civilians about.

Several officers come and talk to us, some of obvious high rank. Most of them speak English or French. They ask us if we would like some food, and produce some bread—with a hunk of bully beef laid thickly on top. A tall, dark, rather nice-looking boy, who speaks excellent English, says he is sorry, but that it's all they have to give us—it's all they have got for themselves. He asks me if I consider the French will be depressed when Paris falls—to-day. Tell him I don't think the fall of Paris will depress the French; they have a marvelous faculty for shrugging their shoulders and saying, "*Tant pis.*" The Tall Boy says the war with France is over, and that she will capitulate within a few days. Do not feel like arguing.

Darby gets on to the subject of propaganda with several officers. She says theirs is all wrong; they say ours is worse. Am told by Tall Boy that the war with England will be over shortly. Tell him I don't think so, but in the circumstances I think it's hopeless for us to discuss the subjects of war or propaganda. I have nibbled all the bully beef off the bread;

never liked bread much, but don't like to throw it away with all these Germans watching me. Tell the Tall Boy I'll give it to one of my wounded, and could they have some food—they have been with us since last night? I've one *grand blessé* in a pitiful state—can he have his wounds dressed? Tall Boy says he'll see about some food for them, and he will take me to the doctor.

We walk to a small cottage near-by. The doctor is a most charming man; he says it is simply no good his even looking at the *grand blessé*, as he has no medical equipment whatever. The German wounded are not brought here, but taken to a château fifteen kilometers away which they have made their base hospital. He will ask the officer-in-charge to give orders for me to drive the ambulance there as soon as possible.

He asks me if there is anything I should like; he thinks being taken prisoner in their front lines must have been a shock for a woman. I say it was nowhere near such a shock as I should have expected it to be. The whole thing seems fantastic and has no reality for me—as yet; it's rather like a film. But if he has got it I should love some tea, or coffee, and some cigarettes. He orders one of the soldiers to heat up some coffee (it's now nearly ten o'clock) and gives me a full pack of twenty Gold Flake. I look at them in astonishment; he tells me he got them in Belgium. Most annoying being given English cigarettes by a German. However, can't look a gift-horse in the mouth.

The water in this village too has been cut off. There is one very old woman, who seems to be the only civilian left in the place. This is her own cottage, and she draws the water from a well in the orchard for the use of the officers billeted in her

home. I ask her if I can wash, and she points to a small basin with a little water.

The Tall Boy is still in the road outside the cottage. He tells me they have several R.A.F. prisoners in a cottage nearby, and that I can go over and talk to them for a second. We walk over to the cottage.

It's pathetic to see a young lad in R.A.F. uniform gazing wistfully out of the window. Tall Boy says I won't be treated as an ordinary prisoner of war and thinks I'll be sent home shortly. He tells me I can take the names and addresses of my fellow-countrymen. The lad leaning out of the window says his name is Breeze, and makes out a list of all the English in the room; and adds to the list the name of one of his pals who was killed. There are a French colonel and some other French officers in the room too, and they give me their names and regiments; it's horribly pathetic.

We return to the village green, and a never-ending stream of men come up to snap me. The ones who want to be included in the photo click their heels, bow, and get one of their friends to take the snap. Am getting tired of all this snapping. Since it seems unavoidable, ask some of the men to send me some prints when the war is over. They take my name and address and say they will. Must have been snapped now hundreds and hundreds of times, front view, back view, side view, sitting, standing, eating, talking.

Ask the Tall Boy why it is that photography seems to be the main hobby of the Germany Army. He says they have never taken women prisoners in their front line before and it's a great novelty for them. Actually there is nothing but grins on all the men's faces. Can quite realize that they probably expected a fight here to-day, and all that the divisional H.Q. gets is a

couple of English ambulance drivers and two French nurses. They seem to think Darby and I are a colossal joke.

Tall Boy reappears with a fair, fat officer, and tells me he is the officer who told us to halt in their lines, and who would like to be introduced to his "captive." Unfortunately, the Tall One says, the Fair Fat One does not speak English or French, so he will interpret.

Ask the Fair Fat One what he would have done if we hadn't stopped. He says he would have jumped on the running-board. Tell him we have no running-board on the ambulance. (Huffer wouldn't have them for that very reason; he hated people jumping on.) The Fair Fat One says then he would have sent despatch riders after us. Ask him *why* he let the first ambulances through. He says he was very surprised to see them dashing along the road. He thought they must be their own, but when he saw us chugging along he was amazed to see my hair blowing out of the window, and then he knew the ambulance couldn't be their own, or possible captured ones, as German women do not drive them.

Ask him if we can't possibly walk over to the French lines —they can't be far away. They obviously will take the wounded prisoners and keep the ambulances, but I can't see the point of their keeping us.

The Fair Fat One says we are no good to them at all, and we shall be much more trouble to them than we are worth, mixed up in their army, but he says they can't let us go over to the French lines for our own safety; we should probably get shot by the French—or by them.

The Fair Fat One asks us if we have any arms. He looks at

my greatcoat pockets very suspiciously. We assure him that we are not armed.

Darby tells me Madame la P— is still arguing with the doctor about her rights re Croix Rouge—and her car. We sit in the ambulance, and the never-ending stream of clicking cameras continues. We seem to be quite a couple of glamour girls.

At last Madame la P— and Mademoiselle appear, and we are off once more, this time to the German base hospital, our usual escort of motor-cyclists fore and aft, even for our tiny convoy of one ambulance and one small car.

It's the most ghastly drive I've ever had, on extremely bad sideroads packed with German cars, tanks, and guns, all coming in the opposite direction to us. The tanks are all right; they seem to be able to turn at right-angles and get off the road if necessary. The large guns versus our ambulance are the chief trouble—the road won't take both. Several times we crawl past each other—with a quarter of an inch to spare between them and the ditch. The traffic is coming down the road in double file when possible; our cyclist goes ahead and tries to get everything into single file to let us pass. Much shouting and shifting about of the German mechanized army.

The road is full of bumps—our *grand blessé* starts groaning, and perpetually calls out, "Oh, la, la . . . oh, la, la!" The poor devil is in an awful state; both his shoulders are crushed and broken, and the bone of one of his elbows is sticking out of the bandage. Each bump on the road must be agony for him—each groan sends cold shivers down my spine; Darby and I wish to goodness he would faint.

We come to a complete blockage of guns; our motor-

cyclist dashes back and tells me the only thing to do is to take the ambulance down and up the other side of the ditch and drive it through the field by the side of the road. Tell him I *can not* take the ditch with our *grand blessé* inside the ambulance; it would about finish him. Great discussions go on in German. I can't think why they don't take the *grand blessé* out while I take the ditch. What they do is to try to fill the ditch up with stones and pieces of wood. Grind my teeth and take the ditch.

The *grand blessé* does not pass out, but groans and groans as I drive along the fields of corn, though these are not as bumpy as the road was. We come to a crossroads, and the cyclist leads the way down one which, glory be, has no traffic on it at all. After a few kilometers he turns into a gateway. *Voilà!* The German base hospital.

It is similar to the Château Minimes—even to the woods. Drive up to the main doorway, and, thank goodness, discharge our wounded. Darby and I are told to take all our personal belongings out of the ambulance, as it will now be taken over. Besides our own things, we take a couple of blankets—we may as well have them as the Germans. Our ambulance is driven away.

We regret we haven't our suitcases with us, but we thank our lucky stars we took some clean things out of them at Rebais. Our worldly possessions are: our uniforms, my great-coat, Darby's mackintosh, two shirts, two pairs of camiknickers, two pairs of stockings, one pair of shoes, gloves, one pair of pajamas, a towel each—and our washing things. Darby has a few hundred francs, I have the three thousand five hundred I drew on Saturday. We have our passports and our certificates as ambulance drivers from the French Government—*Voilà tout!*

We see some of the ambulances from last night's convoy, French, Swedish, Dutch, etc., parked along one side of the hospital. The Dutchman comes up and asks us to join them for lunch. There is an enormous field-cum-garden in front of the hospital; they have foregathered in a corner by some woods. Madame la P— and Joli turn up; we are a very international gathering.

The Dutchman is sweet; they had a lot of tinned food, etc., in their ambulances, and he offers us some awfully nice tinned meat and wine. He gets all our oddments together in a little pile and gives us each two warm woolly shawls.

Joli has been told to stay at this hospital to look after the French wounded, and Madame la P— is to stay too. Mademoiselle is to come with us, wherever that may be.

A soldier parks our ambulance near us; I go over to take a last look at it. A lieutenant comes up and starts chatting to me —he is good-looking, in a hard way. Although I hate seeing all these German uniforms, think they look quite smart. Tell the lieutenant I'm saying good-by to our ambulance. It's sad to think I've driven her for the last time. He says if I like I can drive her to Château-Thierry, where we are going to be taken in a few minutes; he will be in charge of us. All the rest of the ambulance drivers, with Mademoiselle, are to go inside our ambulance.

Every one collects their belongings, and we are off once more. I drive, and the lieutenant sits in front between Darby and me; he speaks very good English. Ask him why a large, bright yellow piece of cloth has been tied across the bonnet and wings. He says so that their planes should know it is one of their own ambulances. He does not reply when I say, "Does

it matter to which side the ambulance belongs? Surely the red crosses painted on it should be sufficient?"

For the first five or six kilometers we drive along empty sideroads, then get on to a road crammed with the mechanized German army. In a way it is a wonderful sight: mile after mile of tanks, guns, lorries, packed tightly together, streaming down the road toward us. Ask the lieutenant why, if they are taking Paris to-day, the army is coming *away* from Paris. He says these troops are coming from north of Paris; they are doing an encircling movement. Poor Paris–poor, poor Paris.

Some of the men, with just their tin helmets and heads sticking out of the tanks, look like modern pictures of robots –very grim. Think the German tin helmets, fitting close to the head, with pieces coming down each side of the neck, look more practical than the English or French ones. Like the look of the bareheaded men best–they are very sunburnt, cheerful, and smiling. Suppose if they take Paris to-day they will be very pleased with themselves.

Our lieutenant remarks that the war with France is finished and over, and that within a month it will be all over with England too. Ask him if he thinks Germany can sink our Fleet, or does he think our Fleet will just scuttle itself? He says he does not think our Fleet matters much one way or another, for this is a war of planes and tanks. He says they have enough submarines to interfere very seriously with our shipping, and their planes will bomb all our ports until it is impossible for us to unload the few ships which their submarines have not sunk. I try to imagine this picture, but can not do so. Tell our lieutenant that I do not believe that they can bomb all our ports to pieces or sink so much of our shipping. What does he think our Navy will be doing meanwhile? And the ports which are damaged–why

can't the ships unload in the harbor and the food be brought ashore in small boats? He says we shall never be able to get enough food into England, and that we shall be bombed to pieces and starved out within a month.

Tell him that, curiously enough, we think that in time we shall starve Germany into submission. He smiles and says few people have any idea how well stocked Germany is. They have enormous supplies of food stocked all over the country which will last them for years and years.

Ask him if he has ever heard of our Old Contemptibles. Apparently he was too young to fight in the last war, but he says he has heard of them. Tell him that although Germany may have the finest army in the world, and the biggest air force, just as our Old Contemptibles did marvels in the last war, I expect our Air Force will soon be doing the same, and although he entirely ignores our Navy, it does happen to be the finest in the world. He repeats that this is a war of airplanes and tanks—backed up by their army. Says he does not wish to depress me, but assures me the war with England will be won and over within a month. Realize the hopelessness of arguing further.

Our lieutenant has to get out every ten minutes or so to try to arrange the traffic. Once again we are going against the stream, which, when it can, comes along in double file, involving frightful rearrangements for us to pass. Sometimes when it is in single file, and there is a large gun which can not move forward or backward, it's almost impossible for me to pass. The last time this happened I had two wheels in the ditch and the ambulance tilted at a most peculiar angle. Darby shouted "Myers, we're going over!" However, our lieutenant, who was then standing in front, beckoned me on. I accelerated as

hard as I could, we seemed to waver in the air, several soldiers in a stationary lorry jumped out and pushed us a little farther on to the road, the wheels gripped, and at last the four of them were on *terra firma*. Do not envy all the people in the back, and thank goodness we have deposited our *grand blessé*.

The lieutenant gets in, and we start again. Find this type of driving on a hot day most heat-making, and while we pull up again to let some small guns pass resort to my flapjack. Our lieutenant is most intrigued by the red initials "A.F.S." on the white enamel. Explain to him that from the outbreak of the war till May I was in the London Auxiliary Fire Service, and this was a birthday gift. He wants to know why I left the A.F.S. in May. Say there was so little work to do that I got bored hanging around waiting for their *Blitzkrieg*. Our lieutenant tells me that the *Blitzkrieg* over London and England will start with all its force within a few days—and that I am lucky to be here.

He is also rather intrigued by the leather purse attached to my belt, and asks if I carry a revolver in it. Laugh, and tell him nothing more frightening than a flapjack, lipstick, comb, etc., and that we don't carry arms, and that I don't think the French doctors do either. He says all German doctors do. He seems most intrigued of all when I fish out my lipstick and put some on. He tells me his wife never makes up, and that he doesn't care for it.

There is now a terrific congestion on the road. A drove of soldiers come up with their cameras; they have been snapping us from their guns and tanks and lorries ever since we left the base hospital. I have traveled nearly all over the world and I am over thirty, yet it takes the German Army to glamourize me. Infuriating.

Our lieutenant seems amused by all this photographing, and says the men have been in Poland, Holland, Belgium, and it's a long time since most of them have seen any pretty girls. Darby and I have no illusions about our looks; Mademoiselle and Madame la P——, who looks very attractive in her nurse's uniform, were practically not snapped at all. Think it's Darby's and my uniforms which intrigue them so.

Our lieutenant tells us we shall not be treated as ordinary prisoners of war, but will shortly be sent to a neutral country. Cheering news.

The German lorries are most remarkable. They are huge, holding about thirty men, with all their equipment, and the seats upholstered in leather are pneumatic. They look extremely comfortable, and mostly have double pneumatic tires. Because we have "*ambulance américaine*" and an American flag painted on the outside of the ambulance, the soldiers, who all look amazed to see us mixed up with them, call out as they pass us, "Women and *Blitzkrieg!*" and, "*Ah, les Américaines!*" Make myself hoarse shouting "*Nein*—English!" Do wish that I knew more than five words of German.

Had an altercation with our lieutenant. One side of the road was clear, and he told me to drive along it for twenty-one yards. He said I stopped two yards short of this distance, and that I did *not* seem to know the difference between twenty-one yards and nineteen. Told him that judging twenty-one yards *exactly* without any markings as a guide was extremely difficult, and that he really was being fussy. He said no one should consider himself a driver at all unless he could judge distances accurately. We glared at each other and for some time now he has become very trying—always making me stop

at varying distances of yards, and fairly *yelling* at me if he doesn't think I've stopped at the exact one.

Actually this traffic is very well organized. Soldiers acting as traffic police have special bands on their arms and direct the traffic with a stick—rather like a *gendarme's* baton—with a large flat disc at the end of it. But the signals they use are quite new to me.

We twist in and out of the tanks, guns, lorries, again—until we come to another complete block. So difficult having to go against all this, instead of following it. Our lieutenant says there is nothing for it now but to take the ditch and go along the side of the fields. Do so. The fields are not nearly as bumpy as one would imagine, and we go on quite happily till there is a pretty good bang above our heads. The lieutenant glares at me again, and I notice that the top of the windscreen is cracked. The windscreen has hit the bottom of a tin advertisement, which is dangling from a high pole. France, like so many other countries, often has the beauty of her country defaced by these ghastly advertisements stuck along the roadside in the fields. Tell the lieutenant that I can not look on the ground for bumps and aloft for advertisements at the same time. He sees the point.

A most appalling smell wafts toward us. The lieutenant points to some woods and says there are a lot of dead Frenchmen in them, and that they haven't had the time to bury them. Farther on I notice some graves with small crosses on them, which the lieutenant tells us are German soldiers' graves.

We get back on to the road and go through a village; the lieutenant points out a tank which is burned out and ditched, and tells us that one of his best friends was recently killed in it.

We pass a soldier with a box, who seems to be tapping the

ground. The lieutenant explains that he is connecting up the French telegraph wires to theirs. None of the wires along the roads have been cut. Tell the lieutenant that I simply can't understand why the French did not even cut their telegraph lines, and I wonder if the French realize that they are all being connected up to the German ones. He shrugs his shoulders.

We come to a crossroads and are told to halt. A signpost says, "Paris, 32 kilometers." The road at right angles to us has no heavy Army traffic on it at all, but a continuous stream of high-speed cars tearing along with German officials inside. They are pouring into Paris!

Paris is obviously *not* being defended. There are not even shell holes in the road to slacken the speed of the cars. They must know there is no danger ahead because they are streaming along without any protection, and the guns are being held up to let them pass.

The Germans are racing to Paris! By their uniforms and cigars they seem to be high officials. I keep my eyes glued on them as they dash by, and I think Hitler may pass any minute and I should love to spit at him. Half an hour has gone, Hitler has not yet passed, and I am sick to death of this scene.

Paris—you certainly have fallen.

The cars are momentarily stopped to let some of our lot of traffic through; the afternoon is drawing to a close.

The lieutenant tells me he thinks I smoke too much; he has offered me several of his cigarettes, and says I shan't be able to get any in Château-Thierry. He says his wife smokes only five cigarettes a day, and if he had anything to do with me he wouldn't let me smoke more. Tell him that because he is German and I am English, and there happens to be a war on between our respective countries, we meet. But under normal

conditions I don't think the occasion would ever arise when he could interfere with my smoking; and I shouldn't be surprised if his wife smoked much more than he thinks, but doesn't bother to let him know.

The lieutenant tells us Château-Thierry is not far away. After a few kilometers we come to it. I have never seen a more desolate sight. It has been badly shelled. The streets are entirely deserted. All the civilians have left. Everywhere is rubble and gaping walls, except for a few German soldiers and starving dogs. I ask the lieutenant if he enjoys looking at the ruins of war. He thinks this is a sorry sight, but says, "This war is necessary. Democracies have made it so."

The bridge over the Marne has been blown up, and for light traffic they are using planks thrown over and tied to small boats with soldiers sitting in them—a most sketchy-looking affair. To get to it at all one has to drive down a steep bank and do an incredibly sharp turn. The planks are fairly narrow, the ambulance fairly wide; it is a question of inches. By turning the wheels an inch too much to left or right in getting on to the planks, and accelerating a little, nothing would be easier than to plunge the ambulance into the river. A fascinating thought, but a stupid one. It's not worth while drowning Mademoiselle and all the men in the back, as well as Darby and myself, in an attempt to drown one German lieutenant.

Take the turn and drive on to the planks, and out of the corner of one eye notice that the lieutenant is measuring the distance his side of the ambulance between the wheels and the edge of the planks. We climb up the bank on the other side of the river. The lieutenant has made no comment whatever.

More gaping walls, more desolation. So this is Château-Thierry. I am directed to the hospital, where we all get out of the ambulance. Our lieutenant tells us we shall spend the night here; he does not know where we shall be sent to-morrow. He surprises me by breaking into a smile, shaking my hand, and saying, "*Auf Wiedersehen.*" He surprises me more when he adds, "You drove well." Either he did not hear my reply, or he has no sense of humor, for his face went back into its abrupt hardness when I said, "Despite the fact that I didn't know the difference between nineteen and twenty-one yards?"

But our lieutenant has his points—and, considering the circumstances, has been rather pleasant. I ask him for his name and address, as after the war—which, I add, England will win—I should like to send him a postcard. He tells me his name, and that he has a flat in Berlin; he drives away in our ambulance. Tell Darby I'm sure there isn't enough petrol for him to get back to the base hospital. She says that won't keep her awake to-night, and she's sure all the tanks and lorries will have plenty of spare petrol, worse luck.

The Dutchman carries Darby's and my things into the courtyard of the hospital. It's now nearly dark, and we are told it's too late for us to have any food. It gets pitch dark by the time Darby, Mademoiselle, and I are taken to a room on the ground floor. It has beds with mattresses, sheets, blankets, and obviously has been recently used for wounded. However, the sheets look fairly clean.

We nickname the Dutchman the "Flying Dutchman," as he is always flying about, helping every one he can. He is one of those lucky people who can speak five or six languages fluently. Flop into bed; dead tired.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15TH

Darby and I don't wake till ten o'clock; no one has called us; Mademoiselle has vanished. When dressed we gaze out of the window on to the main courtyard of the hospital; there are many wounded sitting about and a lot of soldiers hurrying to and fro.

Our bedroom door has not been locked, so we sit on a bench in the courtyard and enjoy the sunshine; it's another beautiful day, and we think all this gorgeous weather is quite wasted with a war on. We thank our lucky stars, though, that all this is happening to us in the summer; and think how we should shiver in these unheated châteaux and living this out-of-door life in the winter.

Those poor refugees! What will they do in the winter?

Tell Darby that whatever we can scrounge in the way of warm clothing we'll scrounge, for goodness knows where we shall fetch up.

The Flying Dutchman passes by; we ask him where there is a toilet. He takes us to another courtyard and points to one of those "*Hommes*" things. The smell from it prevents our going very near. The French haven't cut the telegraph wires, but they have cut off all the water and electricity before evacuating the towns.

There is an open, unguarded door leading from this courtyard on to the road; beyond it are fields and woods glimmering in their summer beauty.

As Darby and I cross the roadway we see several soldiers mending a damaged tank. With surprised faces they watch us take a path leading toward the woods, but they say nothing to us. We remain in the woods for some time; it's very lovely

there. It seems crazy to me that we can't *fout' le camp;* there is no one to bother about us.

The trouble is that all the fields, villages, and towns are probably full of Germans; we should always be questioned about our khaki uniform. Suggest to Darby that we do a little pillaging, get some civilian clothes, and try to work our way back to the French lines. If the Germans spot us we can pass ourselves off as left-behind refugees.

Darby dubious of my suggestions, and would like to know what the Flying Dutchman thinks of it.

We return to the hospital. The Flying Dutchman tells us to "stay put." He thinks we are bound to be released by the International Red Cross shortly. If caught trying to *fout' le camp* we should be either shot or imprisoned.

Lunch is being served from a field kitchen in the main courtyard; all the soldiers are queuing up with basins in their hands, waiting for them to be filled with soup. The Flying Dutchman tells us where we can find some.

We find the basins—they are very dirty, but why worry? We go up to the soldier ladling out the soup. He tells us in French that he will serve us only after the soldiers. The Flying Dutchman wants to know why we are sitting on a bench with our empty basins. We explain. The Flying Dutchman races about talking to officers; we are told to go and have our basins filled. The soup isn't bad at all.

Mademoiselle appears and tells us she was helping with the wounded all the morning; we think she might have told us, as we should have liked to have something to do.

The Flying Dutchman says there is one R.A.F. man here; he gets permission for us to see him, and leads the way. The pilot, a boy, is covered with bandages—he has been badly

burned. All the others are German wounded lying on the straw mattresses in the room, which is very rough and ready; it's only a base hospital.

We interpret for the lad, who can speak only English; he wants to know how long it will be before he can get up. The doctor says—in French—three or four weeks, and, pointing to a bed at the far end of the room, says that the man lying there shot him down. The two airmen grin at each other.

I tell the doctor that war is about the stupidest thing I can conceive of; I am about to add, "Why do dictatorships want so much breathing space—in which to dictate?" when I realize the futility of mentioning the subject, so add instead, "I'm glad to see he gets as much attention as your own wounded do here, and I do hope he will be well looked after when he gets to a proper hospital." The doctor assures me that he will.

The Flying Dutchman takes us to his room. All the ambulance drivers have been put in one large room, with a lot of straw on the floor to sleep on. They give us some more of their delicious tinned meat and some Schnapps to drink; it's delicious, but very potent. Go to sleep in the straw.

The Flying Dutchman wakes me—we have all to go to the Hôtel de Ville. Darby and I collect our belongings, and are infuriated to find our bars of chocolate and my packets of cigarettes have been stolen from our room. We foregather in the courtyard, and two soldiers lead the way to the Hôtel de Ville.

Down one of the streets I see a chemist's shop. The front is gaping open, and, my scrounging instincts uppermost, I leave the others on the road and dash in to try to find some powder, which Darby and I badly need. There are three German officers in the shop, obviously on a scrounging mission too.

They gasp at me. Had I been a giraffe coming in they could not look more surprised. When I speak to them (in French), and ask for some powder, they look simply dazed. However, one of our guards dashes into the shop, and before I have time to grab any powder I am shooed back into the road with the others. The three German officers are left fairly spluttering.

On arrival at the Hôtel de Ville we are told to wait in a large room and are given some tea. The Flying Dutchman has given me a packet of cigarettes, so I smoke, drink the tea, and discuss the future of the war with Darby.

The door suddenly opens; a German officer with an Iron Cross and slashed with ribbons says in perfect English, "Well, it's a great life if you don't weaken." I think he is referring to our conversation about the war and say, "Of course we won't." He looks us up and down and says, "Yes, I can see that," and shuts the door. Quite inadvertently we seem to have gone down well.

The door is often opened by soldiers, coming and going. A small dog runs into the room; every bone in his body is sticking out in bumps, yet he still seems to have faith in human beings, and he runs here and there asking for sympathy. He jumps on to my lap and licks my face in anxious hope.

I can laugh at many things, but not at starving dogs. There is nothing to be done; there is nothing to give him to eat. Darby and I have an attack of the willies, and can't think why they don't shoot these dogs. A soldier tells us to follow him to the Kommandant. We pull ourselves together and hope to goodness he isn't the man who said, "It's a great life if you don't weaken."

He is the last person on earth we want to see at the moment.

The Kommandant turns out to be a different man; he tells

us we can either stay here, at the base hospital, until they know what to do with us, or we can go on with the men ambulance drivers to a camp at Mont Saint-Pierre. Without hesitation we choose to go on with the others. With Mademoiselle we are bundled into a small car, and the men pile such things as they can take from their ambulances on top of us. Mont Saint-Pierre is not very far away; the men have to walk there.

I have always imagined a "camp" as a lot of huts or tents in fields. The camp at Mont Saint-Pierre turns out to be only fields, surrounded by barbed wire and soldiers. Hundreds of French soldiers lie listlessly the other side of the wire. We arrive in the late afternoon; a mist is falling. It is one of those sad, dreary pictures which remain photographed for ever on one's mind.

An officer points to a gate in the barbed wire and tells us to go through. The three of us start arguing; various officers collect round us; it is decided to put us three women in one of the empty villas in the village.

They find us a very pretty one, which has obviously been a week-end place for some Parisians. The house has been left in a hurry; a half-cooked meal is in the kitchen, every drawer is open, most of their contents scattered on the floor.

We ask for something to eat and are told we can have nothing. They say they have practically nothing for themselves.

Darby and I collect towels, soap, scrubbing-brush, and some shoe polish (most useful) which with a tin-opener and some cutlery we pack into a straw basket we found lying upstairs. That's about all the scrounging we can do, so we arrange the two bedrooms. The owners of the villa—like most refugees—have taken all their bedding with them, but fortunately their beds have box mattresses, and we find a spare mattress, which

we put in the corridor for a French ambulance driver with a game leg who has been allowed to come to the villa with us. Just before it gets dark an officer comes in with two tins of canned fish. The ambulance driver finds some wine in the cellar, so we have quite a dinner-party in the dining-room.

Darby and I are rather worried lest we may lose the Flying Dutchman. He must be sleeping in the fields with all those hundreds of other men, and we may not be able to find him in the morning. Another officer bangs on the front door and tells us he will send a soldier to call us at 3:30 A.M.—we are to be off at four o'clock.

We sit on the terrace for a while; it has a magnificent view over the Marne. All the German officers seem to be quartered in the villas round about; they are sitting on various terraces too, and gaze at us with astonishment. Darby discovers that they have not cut off the water in the village. We all have baths in the rather sweet little bathroom the villa boasts, and go to bed.

Frightful bangings on the front door which we presume is the soldier calling us. We grope for our belongings in the pitch dark, and are led to a lorry—the most enormous lorry I have ever seen. It has no roof of any kind, and could easily hold fifty people, but there are only eight soldiers inside, and a gun, which is trained on the men coming out of the fields and being lined up on the road. The soldiers pull us up into the lorry, and from our elevated position we look for the Flying Dutchman. It's impossible to see much; it's still dark, the mist has not risen, and it's bitterly cold. At last we are off. The lorry crawls forward inch by inch, and all the men follow behind on foot. The dawn breaks, and we are thankful when it gets a little warmer.

The soldiers in our lorry have three large baskets piled with eggs, loaves of bread, and innumerable thermos flasks; they guzzle away and don't offer us a thing. Have seldom hated people more. Darby and I are still shivering with cold and frightfully hungry.

At noon the lorry drives into a large field and a general halt is called. We have halted about every two hours to allow the men a few minutes' rest. Poor devils, they are all starving hungry, and must have walked at least eighteen miles. During one of the rests the Flying Dutchman ran up to the lorry to find out how we fared last night; as we ate only one of the tins of fish, we gave him the other. He looked quite drawn with hunger.

This field is similar to the one last night—barbed wire guarded by soldiers. The men pour in—I am told there are over eighteen hundred prisoners, including officers.

The Flying Dutchman talks to the German officers. He tells me the only food there to be distributed is French Army bread and cheese; each man will have five grams of cheese, and six men will have to share one loaf of bread. A long trestle table is put up in the field; the Flying Dutchman weighs out the cheese on scales, and the men file past the table in groups of six. It is fantastic to watch six hungry men being given so little cheese and one loaf of bread among them. The Army bread, I should imagine, was baked several months ago—it is as hard as wood, and although its original color must have been brown it is now chiefly green.

We are told we can all write postcards to say we are prisoners of war. A German officer who speaks French tells me that a postcard will get to England. As I haven't one, he gives me one of his, and writes across it "*Feldpost über die Schweiz.*"

He says I can only write the date and that I'm a prisoner of war and in good health. I do so, and give him the postcard, and ask him to be sure to see that it goes. He assures me it will, and asks me to tell all the prisoners to put their cards in a hay cart at the end of the field, and to be sure to tell them not to write too much, for then their cards will not be sent in. So for the next half-hour I am busy as a bee.

There is one poor French officer who obviously has concussion. His tin helmet has a large dent in it, and he has a bump on his forehead the size of a cricket ball. He follows me about in a dazed way and hasn't even realized that he can have some bread and cheese.

Darby, Mademoiselle, and I, with the French ambulance driver with the game leg, are told to get into another lorry which has just arrived, and the men file out off the field into the road. Suddenly the French officer with concussion comes to life, brushes the German officer aside, and starts shouting orders to what he imagines are his troops. The Flying Dutchman rushes up and saves the situation. The French officer is put in the lorry with us. I tell him to take off his tin helmet—he has crammed it on his head over the bump on his forehead—but he doesn't seem to understand and looks utterly dazed. So I take the helmet off and throw it out of the lorry, as I feel sure he would only put it on again.

The lorry goes ahead, leaving the men on the road behind, and after a little while we are told to get out. We are before an imposing building from which the swastika is flying. We are told we are outside the Hochkommandantur of Soissons.

3

L'Hôpital Militaire, Soissons

THE FRENCH OFFICER with concussion and the French ambulance driver are told to follow an officer. Darby, Mademoiselle, and I are led down the street by another and told we are to spend to-night at any rate in the German barracks. Darby and I are frightfully upset, as apparently we have lost the Flying Dutchman and Co. It seems there is no room for any more prisoners here; the rest will probably be sent to Laon or various prison camps in France. Laon, they tell us, is the clearing station for prisoners of war, and from there they are generally sent on to Germany. At the barracks we are interviewed by two Kommandants. Mademoiselle produces her international *laissez-passer*, and we our passports and our certificates from the Consulat-Général de France de Londres.

The Kommandants don't seem to be very interested in our papers, and ask how we got here—and if we've had anything to eat. They order some food for us, in a little dining-room which is apparently the officers' mess, and, as neither of the Kommandants speaks much French, they have a French poilu to act as interpreter. We are told there are several French prisoners in the barracks, and we shall be waited on at table by a French girl who did not leave Soissons, but we are not permitted to talk to any one and there are no cigarettes in Soissons for me to buy. We are given some very good soup,

bread and butter, and coffee, and are led back to the inquiry-cum-reception room, as the Hoch Kommandant of Soissons wants to see us.

He doesn't seem very interested in our papers either: says he has no idea where we will be sent. But he gives me a packet of twenty Camels, which seems to annoy the Kommandant of the barracks. I call him the Nasty One: he has an extremely disagreeable face and manner. The Nasty One takes us upstairs. Mademoiselle is put in a bedroom at the far end of the corridor: Darby and I share one just opposite the stairs.

Our room is very pleasant, with a large double bed and clean sheets. Although it is only nine o'clock and not nearly dark, Darby and I are extremely sleepy, and decide to go to bed. Our room has three doors; two of them are locked. The third, which leads into the corridor, has no key. We push a chair under the handle, as we notice a large dormitory for soldiers opposite our room.

While we are undressing we hear a lot of giggling and scuffling going on outside our room. I think that probably the soldiers don't know this room is now occupied: Darby's comment is that they know it only too well. I am too tired to worry over anything and don't think the soldiers will get as far as forcing our doors open. Tell Darby I am going to sleep, and, vaguely remembering about some trick supposed to be known to all glamorous spies, policewomen, and, I believe, advanced girl guides, I add that we had better keep our shoes and our torch at hand. Am just off to sleep when Darby says, "Myers, look at the door handle." It is quite uncanny to watch: silently it turns, and drops off into the chair. Before either of us has time to speak the double doors opposite us

start bulging ominously. Darby and I jump out of bed, and just as we reach the double doors they are forced open.

We face a crowd of young soldiers—we yell at them and slam the doors in their faces. Unfortunately now the lock is broken and the doors won't shut properly. We decide to dress, find the Nasty One, and complain to him. On the landing we meet Mademoiselle, who says the soldiers have been trying to get into her room too. When we say we are going to complain she, for some reason or other, goes back to her room.

We have a bit of difficulty getting down the stairs—the electricity (and the water) has been cut off, and it must be past eleven o'clock, for we can hardly see a thing. I fall down the last three stairs. Candles in the hall show the shadowy forms of soldiers, apparently on guard, and at last we make them understand we want to see the Kommandant. Finally the Nasty One appears. He listens to our tale of woe and broken doors with considerable annoyance, and comes upstairs with us to verify the facts for himself. After going over to the men's dormitory he tells us he has given orders to the soldiers not to leave their dormitory. Tell Darby I only hope the German Army is as well disciplined as we are led to believe. ... We get into bed once more—just off to sleep when we hear banging on the door which leads on to the landing. The Nasty One yells that we are to get dressed immediately. Swearing, we do so. We meet Mademoiselle on the landing: the Nasty One with a torch leads the three of us downstairs to the hall.

The Hoch Kommandant appears and says he has been told that we have been annoyed by the soldiers. We couldn't be sorrier than he is: we must realize they are only young lads, and it is unusual for them to have women sleeping opposite them. He has ordered them to leave their dormitory, and they

are all to sleep in the corridor on the next landing; he will give us a guard to see that none of them come up the stairs. He shakes us by the hands and says good night. The Nasty One leads us upstairs again, and we go to bed once more. We hear the tramping and the cursing of the soldiers as they are marched down to the next landing and send up a maiden's prayer that we shall be moved on to some other place to-morrow, as we imagine we are pretty unpopular now with the soldiers.

We don't wake up till ten o'clock. The girl who served us at dinner last night brings us some water at 10:30, so we get up and dress, and are taken down to the little officers' mess for breakfast—coffee, eggs, sardines, and bread and butter. Then we are taken back to our room and told to stay there. We push open the double doors to see where they lead. The next room is obviously the linen and mending room of what was a large boys' school. We each pinch two pairs of boys' flannel pajamas and several pairs of boys' long woollen socks: I take a lovely eiderdown, and Darby a woollen blanket. With some string which we find we tie our spoils up in the blanket from the ambulance.

We get awfully bored sitting in the bedroom, and are thankful when we are taken down to lunch (soup, bread, and coffee, also some kind of sweet). Once more we are sitting bored to sobs in the bedroom, when the Nasty One tells us to follow him, as the Hoch Kommandant has invited us to have coffee with him. He leads us to the Hochkommandantur—which was the archbishop's palace. The Hoch Kommandant gives us coffee and offers us cigarettes; he is very intrigued to know why none of us is married. Mademoiselle bursts into tears: her *fiancé*, she says, has just been killed. The Hoch Kommandant

is rather embarrassed, and suggests we spend the afternoon in the garden and tells us we can pick all the fruit we like.

It is a pretty garden—Darby and I get down to the strawberries. A German soldier comes along and tells us in excellent English that he is the Hoch Kommandant's batman. He was for two years a prisoner of war in England during the last war. I ask him if he was well treated, if he had enough to eat, and if people were kind to him. He says he was well treated and was given plenty to eat, but naturally he didn't much like being a prisoner of war and would much rather have been in Germany fighting. We tell him we don't like being prisoners of war either.... He gives us a large bottle of Evian water each, and goes off to ask the Hoch Kommandant if he can give us a box of matches and some packets of cigarettes: he comes back with them. Mademoiselle goes in to talk with the Hoch Kommandant, and comes back to tell us she will be sent to work in a French hospital here. We ask if anything was said about us; she says we were not mentioned. The Nasty One leads us all back to the barracks. Soissons has not been nearly so badly shelled as Château-Thierry, and there are no signs of looting: the shops and houses are shut, but no entry has been forced. There is no sign of any civilians. We lie on the bed and get bored again. Mademoiselle comes in to say good-by; she is leaving at once. We are quite indifferent to her departure. The Nasty One comes in apparently to see what we are doing. We ask him if we can have a guard for to-night. He says certainly not; he can not waste any soldiers ("Wars are not won by guarding women"), and he suggests we put on our pajamas. If the soldiers come in we can scream. We explain that we had our pajamas on last night, but that didn't deter the soldiers from trying to get into our room.

The Nasty One shrugs his shoulders and tells us if they try again to-night we can scream—some one will probably hear us. Our opinion of him, which was very low, drops to zero.

More bangings on the door. The Nasty One comes in again and says we are to get up at once and wash ourselves. The Hoch Kommandant has invited us to dinner.

We tell him that of course we should wash—had we any water. He shouts to a soldier, who brings us some, and stands in the doorway while we are washing, saying, "Hurry, hurry." When we start doing our faces he tells us he does not approve of women using make-up, and we are to "Hurry, hurry, hurry." Darby and I don't take the slightest notice and take as long as we can. The Nasty One gets almost beside himself with rage: I imagine he has never been kept waiting before in his life. We tell him it always takes us a long time to make up our faces, and if he is in such a hurry he should have told us sooner that we were invited out to dinner.

We walk to the Hochkommandantur in silence. The Hoch Kommandant greets us in the hall. With him are three other officers to whom we are introduced. They click their heels and bow. Double doors are thrown open; the Hoch Kommandant tells us to lead the way.

The dining-room is attractively lit with candles in cut-glass chandeliers: the archbishop's silver and cut-glass gleam; cold meats of various kinds are spread on the embroidered white tablecloth, and a large dish of butter is placed before each person. We are waited on by the batman and another soldier. Darby and I sit either side of the Hoch Kommandant—it would be my luck to have the Nasty One on my left. The Hoch Kommandant passes around a large decanter filled with rum, and we observe the thing to do is to pour it into our

tea. I have never drunk rum that way before, but I like it. The conversation is general—and I hope the topic of war will not crop up. The Hoch Kommandant and the officers seem to be of the same opinion—the atmosphere is genial and friendly. We all speak French except one officer, who chips into the conversation in German, the Hoch Kommandant acting as interpreter.

As I have no idea how to address the Hoch Kommandant, I call him "*Mein Herr*," and ask if that is correct. He smiles and says it will do, but adds that it is a form of address which is now less frequently used. I tell him that *mein Herr*, like *monsieur*, covers a multitude of palaver, and unfortunately in our language we have not the equivalent of either.

I also say how I appreciate German music and poetry, especially *Die Lorelei* and the music it was set to. The Hoch Kommandant replies that as it was written by a Jew it is no longer allowed to be sung in Germany. I tell him I think it fortunate for the Germans that Wagner was not a Jew, otherwise they would be deprived of some of the most beautiful music in the world.... They have already lost the poetry of Heine. They all seem surprised that I appreciate Wagner—even more so when I talk of Frida Leider, Melchior, and Furtwängler, and they ask me if I have been to Bayreuth. I tell them unfortunately I have not been there, but have learned to appreciate Wagner at Covent Garden.

From poetry and music we get on to the subject of culture. It is agreed that we all appreciate it. I say that although I love it, I don't know exactly what it is: I have spent a month in Russia and heard the word used more frequently there than in any other country I have been to, but I never saw a sign of what I should call culture. I have come to the conclusion

that culture must be the refinement of feeling expressed in thought. The Hoch Kommandant says that does not cover the whole field of culture; I have left out knowledge. But knowledge by itself, I say, does not necessarily mean culture. There is a general argument, and we decide that culture is knowledge, love of learning, and refinement of thought. I say I do not find culture compatible with war. The Hoch Kommandant replies that he enjoys culture, but believes in force. I must have been looking at him in astonishment, for he adds, "Yes, I believe in force—but I regret it." I flatly contradict him. "You say you believe in force, *mein Herr*. Mademoiselle Darby and I are your prisoners of war, yet we are guests at your dinner-table; you surely must believe in evolution, because not so many hundreds of years ago we would have been thrown to your soldiers before we were sacrificed to your gods. Instead, here we are enjoying your hospitality." This momentarily stumps the Hoch Kommandant, but after a moment's reflection he tells me that it is only the outward form of force which has changed. The fact remains, and if anything is to be done in this world, force is necessary. He regrets it, but it is so. Curiously enough, this seems to be an opening to ask him if we could have a guard for to-night. He promptly says, "Yes," gives an order to the soldier waiting at table, and apologizes for any inconvenience which we might have had last night. The Nasty One looks furious and says he does not believe we are ambulance drivers at all. Munitions drivers he thinks is nearer the mark. Darby and I hotly dispute with him.

We ask what has happened to the French officer with concussion. The Nasty One says he does not think he has concussion; he thinks he is just shamming. I explain to the Hoch Kommandant that just where the officer had a large dent in

his tin helmet he also had a bump twice as large on his forehead. Has the Hoch Kommandant seen him himself? He says he has, and that he will be sent to hospital. That is an opening to inquire what will become of us. The Hoch Kommandant shrugs his shoulders and says he doesn't know: our case will be dealt with by authorities elsewhere. He thinks it quite probable we shall be sent to Laon. Darby and I exclaim with horror, "Not Laon!" We tell him we have heard that prisoners from there are sent into Germany. The Hoch Kommandant smiles and tells us if we are sent to Germany it will not be *so* bad. I hastily explain that I can understand that he loves Germany, but naturally we should prefer to be sent to England or remain in France. Why can't we work in a hospital like Mademoiselle? Although we have no nursing experience we can help in small ways. The Hoch Kommandant thinks it's a pity that he can not use us as drivers, but explains that all the driving for the German Army is done by men. We ask him if we shall be released by the International Red Cross or exchanged for other prisoners of war. He tells us that in this war no prisoners are being exchanged. He thinks and hopes it possible that through the International Red Cross we may be sent to a neutral country. However, he says he can tell us very little, as the final decision of what is to become of us does not rest with him. I hope nevertheless he'll put in a good word for us. He says he will. He thinks the war will be over within a month, so in any case we shan't have long to wait before we reach home. He tells us in civil life he is a farmer; and he thinks that after the war the whole of Europe will be very poor indeed.

Bristol, he says, and many other of our ports have been extremely heavily bombed. I say I do not think England will

capitulate or that the war will be a short one. The Hoch Kommandant is about to launch upon a long argument when I realize the futility of discussing the war and prevent it by hastily apologizing for having mentioned the subject.

The archbishop's brandy is served as a liqueur. I offer my cigarettes round the table. The Hoch Kommandant advises me not to be so generous with them, as they are impossible to buy in Soissons. I say that nevertheless I should like to offer them—they are his anyway. The brandy is old and mellow; I ask how one says "*A votre santé*" in German. They say that the literal translation is "*Auf Ihr Wohl,*" but that generally one says "*Prosit.*"

I comment on how glad I am that I have not seen any starving dogs in Soissons. The Hoch Kommandant tells me I shall see no starving dogs or cats; he has given orders to have them all shot—he can not bear to see them starving. I positively glow toward him.

The party breaks up at twelve—we arrived at 7.30, and the hours have slipped pleasantly by. We are escorted back to the barracks by the three officers. It is a brilliant moonlight night which shows up the beauty of the old cathedral. Except for ourselves, the streets are entirely deserted. The officers take us up to our bedroom; there is much clicking of heels and bowing and "*Gute Nacht.*" A soldier with a candle stuck in a bottle stands to attention at the top of the stairs; he is our guard for the night. We have enjoyed the evening, and Darby and I come to the conclusion that nothing would ever surprise us any more. But I am certain that the farther away we get from the German Army the less of glamour girls we shall be. I can quite see that as the only two English women we are of great interest to them, but as a couple of prisoners of war in some

concentration camp in the heart of Germany we shall be one of a very motley crowd. Darby wonders what on earth will become of us; I say it is no use thinking about it at all; one just doesn't and can't know.

TUESDAY, JUNE 18TH

I ask a German soldier on the stairs for some water to wash with; after an argument he brings me some. I have a shot at washing my hair in the bottle of Evian, but Darby says I am making a frightful mess of my hair and wasting the water. The Nasty One dashes into our room to tell us we must leave the barracks immediately. We must pack up all our belongings and have breakfast within the next ten minutes. We ask where we are going, but all he can say is "Hurry! Hurry!"

We get our things together as quickly as possible, and go downstairs to the officers' mess, where breakfast is waiting for us: two hard-boiled eggs each, sardines, bread and butter, and coffee. We only have time to grab an egg each; the Nasty One keeps saying, "Hurry! Hurry!" I gulp down some coffee, Darby grabs a couple of eggs and puts them in her knapsack, and we are rushed out of the barracks into a waiting car. Getting tired of being bundled into cars and not having the slightest idea where we are off to. Five minutes in the car, and we arrive at a large imposing building. We are told to get out and wait. While we are sitting on the grass we watch the coming and going of ambulances and see nurses and doctors standing in groups talking in German, and come to the conclusion it is a hospital. In half an hour a German doctor comes and tells us to follow him. He orders a French poilu to carry our belongings for us. We follow the doctor through three large courtyards; it is a huge, rambling building built in

squares, with a courtyard and garden in the center of each. After passing three courtyards the German doctor tells us we are now in the French side of the hospital. He tells the poilu to fetch the Médecin Chef, and when he arrives tells him we are to stay here. This, at any rate, is cheering news; for the moment we are in a French hospital and very glad to be there. Germany seems far away. Mademoiselle passes us in the corridor—I have never seen anybody look less pleased to see us; her face drops several inches.

She tells us she is not a prisoner of war, but that we are. We discover that she has a very nice bedroom on the second floor. There is an empty one opposite hers with two beds in it, a wardrobe, table, and wash-basin. However, she says we are not to have that room, and refuses to give us a reason. The Médecin Chef tells us it is quite all right for us to sleep there. Jean, an *infirmier*, produces mattresses and sheets, complete with pillows and pillow-slips. We are very pleased with our room. Jean shows us the dining-room. There are eight French doctors; one, I discover, is called Dr. Jacques, 64th Division, and he has the Military Cross. He tells me he was up in the front line with two divisions—they had only one gun. Another doctor says, "France has always lived too well—only forty hours' work per week and practically every workman has his car. Not," he adds, "that that is wrong, but no one in France understands the meaning of work or unity." We have only bread and cheese for lunch and some appalling liquid which is neither tea nor coffee—it is brownish in color, highly sweetened, and I'm told it is the famous German acorn tea. The doctors tell us that to-morrow we must work in the surgery and the ward. They have all been captured, and are prisoners too.

After lunch there does not seem to be anything to do, so Darby and I sit in the garden and go to sleep. A German corporal comes along, and I arrange to buy some cigarettes through him. Apparently there is a canteen in the German side of the hospital, and he can get them for me there. The water and electricity are cut off, so the inside lavatories are unusable. We have noticed that the men had large pits dug for them. At dinner I ask the Médecin Chef what sort of toilet accommodation he will arrange for us. He shrugs his shoulders and says he doesn't know—"*C'est la guerre.*" After dinner Darby and I go for a stroll in the garden and meet the German corporal. We explain to him that there simply are no sanitary arrangements here for us; he agrees, and says he will fix something up for us by to-morrow. We thank him, fetch a little water from the practically empty bath where it is kept, and go to bed.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19TH

We get up at eight o'clock. There is some water in the pail, so wash my hair (filthy). Darby rinses it for me, and says I'm using up too much of the water. Tell her I can wash my legs and feet in it, and she ought to do the same.

The Médecin Chef tells us to work in the surgery, which we find at last. It's a little room with a tiled floor and masses of windows. A large operating table in the center takes up most of the space. I am told to wash the scissors and instruments, and am given two little dishes exactly like those used for developing films. Each is half-filled with water, and one has a few drops of *eau oxygénée* [1] poured in it. I am also given decrepit

[1] *Eau oxygénée:* peroxide of hydrogen.

nail-brush and told to brush scissors in one dish and rinse them in the other, which has the *eau oxygénée* in it.

A lot of *semi-blessé* cases come in, and the doctors get busy. I am soon surrounded by scissors. The water in both dishes gets simply disgusting with blood and pus–it makes me feel quite sick. Say I *must* have more water, and am told I must manage with what I've got. Have nothing to wipe the scissors with, so ask for a towel and am told to find one. After much wandering round innumerable rooms find fairly clean pillow-slip in a cupboard, take it back to the surgery, and find the doctors screaming for their scissors. Wipe a few dry on the pillow-slip. Realize that the doctors are using the scissors for prodding about in the wounds for shrapnel. From one enormous wound they cut a lot of blackish-greenish flesh, and then fling the scissors at me. The wound was obviously gangrenous, and yet I'm expected to wash those scissors with the others in this filthy water. Do not believe that a few drops of *eau oxygénée* can have any effect whatever. Shouldn't think the pillow-slip can help matters much. Can not understand the whole thing; it seems utterly chaotic.

A nice French captain tells me he will talk to the German corporal about my cigarettes; give him 100 francs to give the corporal. Later tell the corporal what I've done. He goes into long explanations about not being allowed to buy cigarettes for us; how he'd be punished if he were found out, and that he's doing it on the Q.T. He is a tall, fair, well-built chap, and speaks English quite fluently. He also is of the opinion that the war will be over within a month, and is thoroughly German in his feeling that the Germans are a super race. He has had no leave for eighteen months and is longing to return home. He can not understand the English for prolonging the

war. He has arranged our *toilette* as far from the hospital as he can.

A doctor tells me to find out if all the men who want their wounds dressed have been to the surgery. Personally think it just as well if they don't have their wounds dressed. One of the *semi-blessés* is a most interesting-looking man, with the blackest of black beards. He says his home is in Morocco, that he is fed up with the French Government, and that France has always had to put up with the world's worst Government. I say, "Isn't it a fact that nations generally get the Government they deserve?" He more or less agrees, and adds that if France does not have a better Government when he is freed he will go in for politics himself.

Notice the best-looking man I've seen for years, who actually has a well-trimmed beard. Ask him if he is badly wounded. He says, "Only in my heart, mademoiselle, because France has been so betrayed." *Tiens*, so he has wit as well as looks. He tells me his name is Lucien. He also is fed up with the French Government, and says that they and the Army had no organization or plans at all. His division was told to retire at 11 A.M., but the majority didn't get the order till 7 P.M.! Most were captured. He escaped in his tank, but was captured days later, when he ran out of petrol.

Think it about time I wash the *grands blessés*, so find out where their ward is, and have five shocks—the ward itself, the sight of the inmates, the priest, the man with the sore eyes, and the man without a face. But before that Mademoiselle gives me quite a shock. I ask her what I am to wash the men with. She tells a poilu to get me a basin and some soap, and the same for Darby, but after half an hour's waiting we start rummaging about ourselves. We have just found two basins when Made-

moiselle comes tripping along and asks (sweetly) if we have finished washing the *grands blessés*. Darby lashes out most effectually, and Mademoiselle condescends to find us some towels and soap. We arrange to meet her in the bathroom. The bath is now only quarter full of water. Innumerable *infirmiers* come in and out, emptying bedpans into the sink, which smells. Darby and I decide to wait for Mademoiselle in the corridor, and after a quarter of an hour resolve to use two of our own pieces of soap. We fetch them, and have just torn up some pillow-slips for towels when Mademoiselle at last comes along and informs us she can find no towels or soap. I ask her what we are to wash the *grands blessés* with, as I refuse to use my face-flannel. She takes us to the surgery, gives us some cotton wool, and says we must make *one* basin of water do for three men. My imagination will not take this in, so say, "How can it be *possible* to wash *three* men in one stupid little basin of water like this?" She points to the bath.

Darby and I go to the ward and decide we shall each take one side. Then I have the shock about the ward. It's a long room with rows of windows on each side; one row looks on to the garden, the other on to a corridor. It is indescribably filthy —dust, dirt, discarded dressings, bedpans, and flies everywhere. The *grands blessés* are no better off; they are lying in their uniforms without sheets on straw mattresses with only a blanket for covering. Tackle the first one nearest the wall, a mere boy who can't possibly be more than nineteen. He is dead white, and looks very surprised to see me. Explain I have come to wash him, and have only a basin of water to do him and two others. He looks very pleased and says, "*Merci bien.*" Do his face and the faces of two next to him, and return to him for his hands, which are coated with coagulated blood and

filth. Ask him how long he has been here and if he has been washed. He says he can't remember exactly how long he's been here, but over a month, and no one has ever washed him. Can not take this fact entirely in, but realize it accounts for the condition of his hands. Rub them with cotton wool, which gets very soggy after it's been wet for a bit.

Am absorbed in the effort when I am suddenly addressed in fluent French by a German officer with a lot of mauve on his uniform. He asks me if I will go immediately to the operating theatre, as a nurse is urgently required. Explain I would willingly, but as I know nothing about nursing or operations I'm afraid I should be more trouble than I was worth. He looks surprised, and asks me why I'm here; explain I'm an English prisoner of war, and that I was an ambulance driver. He flashes at me one of the world's sweetest smiles, and says, "*Alors, mademoiselle*, then you too have done a great service for the wounded." Am completely flabbergasted, and as he goes out of the ward rush after him: "Pardon, monsieur, who *are* you?"

"Mademoiselle, I am a priest." Feel completely flattened, and wish all Germans were priests.

Continue attempting to clean the Mere Boy's hands, and empty the water down the sink in bathroom and collect another basinful. Tackle the next three—the third is the Man with the Sore Eyes. They are completely bunged up with matter, and I do not know how badly or where he is wounded, as he is covered up with a blanket and lies quite still, saying nothing. So I try to get some of the matter off his eyes with a fresh piece of cotton wool. An awful lot of matter comes away, and quite suddenly one very deep blue eye opens and stares at me. Don't know why, but this gives me quite a shock.

Ask him if he would like me to do the other eye; he nods, so I do it. Don't know what to do with all the dirty bits of cotton wool I'm collecting, so throw them in the bedpans, which are lying about unpleasantly full.

All goes more or less well, till I come to the Man Without a Face at the end of my side of the ward. To begin with, I don't know what *is* on the bed, as it's chiefly flies. However, I flick my pillow-slips about, and discover the poor devil has only the contour of his face left and one eye, which, although bunged up, seems to see a bit, because he obviously realizes I'm near him. He has dirty bandages so loosely wound around his face that there are big gaps between all the folds. Just manage not to retch when I see his jersey. He has obviously never had it taken off since his arrival and it is *covered* with layers of mucus which have dripped from what should have been his mouth—he hasn't even been given a tube. Since I can do nothing about his face, tell him I shall wash his hands. Try to cope with them. When I've finished I hear quite distinctly from that mess of a face, "*Merci bien, mademoiselle.*" Feel annihilated. Go to our bedroom and thank God I've a few cigarettes left. Would willingly give two years of my life for a whisky and soda, four years for three.

Darby comes in—neither of us feels like discussing the *grands blessés*, and things are not improved by an appalling lunch—just uncooked, undrinkable rice soup. We sleep in the garden till the German corporal wakes us up and says we must work. Go to the surgery; same procedure as morning. One man has his arms unbandaged, and before the doctors can prod about an entire bullet drops out on to the floor. He asks me to pick it up, as he would like it as a souvenir.

The doctors ask us if we will take supper to the *semi-blessés*.

It consists of one piece of French bread with paste on it for each man. Jean, who seems to be the brightest of the *infirmiers*, piles the pieces of bread into a basket; Darby and I give each man a piece. As there are several pieces over, we tell the men to toss for them, which they do. Return empty basket to Jean. Lucien comes over, furious, as he says we've left out a room full of wounded. Darby and I *most* concerned, but Jean suddenly says he has a few pieces of bread left (obviously had them up his sleeve the whole time). We put them in the basket and return to the room with Lucien. Thank goodness, they go around, and there are two pieces left over, which we tell Lucien he'd better eat or share with his *copains*.[1]

Neither Darby nor I like giving out the supper, as all the men say they are hungry, and one piece of bread for each man can't possibly be enough.

Have our own supper with *les médecins*, which is exactly the same as the wounded's, except for some warm liquid in a pail which might be either tea or coffee, or for that matter—anything on earth.

See the nice French officer, who says that as he speaks fluent German, he will go over to the Kommandant at the hospital to-morrow and tell him that we are ambulance drivers, *not* munitions drivers. Apparently the Germans think we are munitions drivers (that, I suppose, is due to the Nasty One, who at dinner at the Hochkommandantur would insist that we were). The officer says the French Army has *not* capitulated, and that they are still fighting on the Loire.

Play bridge with *les médecins;* none of them have the slightest idea of the game, except Dr. Jacques. They talk about

[1] *Copain:* pal.

killing rats to eat. Darby spends the evening with Lucien. As I go to bed still hear a kitten mewing in the surgery cupboard. Suppose there is not enough water to drown it in; don't think it will ever find its mother.

THURSDAY, JUNE 20TH

The German corporal barges into our room and tells us we must get up and work. Do so in surgery. Hopeless dirt, washing instruments. The man with the gangrenous wound is screaming his head off. Doctor gives him a morphine injection, and tells me he will die in a few days. Man still screaming—why didn't the doctor give him an overdose? Kitten still mewing in cupboard—some one should strangle it. I would if I could. All these noises are appalling.

Chat on the stairs with a frightfully cheery poilu with a gorgeous golden beard. He says that in civil life he is a baker. The nice French captain tells me that the German corporal says the franc is now worthless. . . . See Lucien—he, of course, has managed to find some water and looks very clean.

Wash the wounded. The Man without a Face still says "Thank you." Am told Germans will eventually operate on him—they do all the operations in their section—but that is no reason whatever for just leaving this poor devil as he is; it's an utter *disgrace.*

Run into another wounded French captain who has just been taken prisoner—usual story.

Lunch—bean soup, with a lot of bacon fat floating about in it. Every one very hungry. As for breakfast, we only had the warmish liquid and bread.

Again ask to see the Kommandant of the hospital, but the German corporal says *no.* He has kept my 100 francs and

only given me one packet of twenty Chesterfields. *Tant pis.*

After taking around the supper am told to distribute some cigarettes which the Germans have sent over. There are two for each man. Darby and I feel like Ladies Bountiful.

We have cheese with the bread for supper. While playing bridge with the doctors the baker brings me some strawberries which he has pinched from the garden. The doctors say that two men with gangrene have just died.

Darby has spent evening with Lucien. Tell her that she should suggest to him that he should wash our shirts. She says nothing doing, as she has had quite a time explaining to him that she has no urge to be slobbered over. I say that I can quite understand any man as good-looking as Lucien being most surprised to find any woman not panting at the leash for some of his *amour*, but I do think she might get him to the point where he would wash our shirts. Darby says she is quite capable of managing her own affairs. I say quite, but she will probably do so in a filthy shirt.

FRIDAY, JUNE 21ST

Get up 7:45 before German corporal barges into our room. Cut my thumb with knife while scraping the mud off my shoes, so don't like washing instruments.

Discover that the *infirmiers* have used our ward towels and basins for washing up our dinner plates. Am furious; find Darby and tell her we *must* keep the towels and basins in our bedroom. Man with Sore Eyes much better; he has very little matter on them now.

Our *toilette* will be quite spoilt, as they are digging another big pit for the men next to it. The men's pits are just pits with planks over them—nothing more and nothing less. Darby and

I think it's the limit that they should put another pit so close to ours.

The baker scrounges some hot tea for us, but the glass into which he is pouring it breaks in my hand and cuts it quite deeply between thumb and forefinger. Refuse to let the doctors dress it, and when they have left the surgery Darby bandages it up for me after using some disinfectant on it. The baker says there has been a row about pinching fruit, and that they have been definitely forbidden to go to the garden. Personally think the Germans very optimistic if they imagine they can keep hundreds of hungry men from picking fruit which is growing under their noses.

Meet a Polish woman in the corridor. She says she is married to a Frenchman, and has been brought here by the Germans for the night. She evacuated her farm, as all the cattle were being shot down for sport. She says the young airmen are the worst—and worse than the devil. One of her dairymaids was shot at and killed while milking a cow in the fields. She took a cart, the three women left on the farm, and five children; they had no rest, as the Germans were catching up with them all the time. They came to a village, the Germans caught up, and mowed down the line of refugees with tanks, as they wanted to get at French soldiers in a wood near-by.

She was sitting in the cart at the time, holding one of the children (which happened to be her own). She managed to fling herself and the child down in a ditch. She escaped with her child, who was badly wounded in the head by shrapnel. She lost her way and ran into the Germans again, who sent her and the child to hospital after hospital. The little boy died, but she said the German nurses had been very kind to him. She suddenly broke down and sobbed, "*Mon petit gosse! Mon*

pauvre petit gosse!" I could think of nothing to say . . . so I asked her where her husband was. "*Il est prisonnier. . . .*" She can not think what her husband will say when she tells him their child is dead; he absolutely adored *le petit*. She doesn't know what happened to the other women and children in the cart. She has never seen or heard of them since. When her child died she was sent here. To-morrow she will be sent on to her home, and does not know in what condition she will find it. She thinks the Germans want civilians to return to their homes, and several have returned to Soissons. She had just come from Laon, where there are eight hundred French wounded in the hospital, no water, and twenty nurses. I tell her I am a prisoner of war, and we wish each other "*au revoir et bonne chance.*"

Wash *grand blessés*. Bully beef on bread for supper with coffee. Sit on terrace with the doctors. Mademoiselle says she can not imagine what she will do for shoes, as her heel is coming off. The German corporal, who has joined us, offers to show us where we can do a lot of scrounging. He takes us to a small cottage built into the hospital which obviously belonged to the matron-cum-linenkeeper. There are cupboards full of clean linen! The cottage has been evacuated in a very great hurry; clothes of all descriptions lie all over the place. Darby and I do ourselves proud and take armfuls of sheets and pillow-cases, etc., which we give to the *infirmiers* and tell them they must put them on the beds of the *grands blessés* the first thing to-morrow.

On the terrace again the corporal produces a bottle of wine and offers me a cigarette. He tells me he learned his English in England, where he was a prisoner of war for two years. Ask him my three usual questions: "Were you well treated?"

"Did you have good food?" "Were people kind to you?" He answers yes to all of them. He says he is fed up. He has lost a stripe because without orders he beat a Jew to death in Poland. Evidently all forms of German sport must be organized.

Darby and I say we are tired and going to bed. Darby says the man from Morocco has told her that peace was signed at eleven o'clock last night in a railway carriage—the same as the armistice in the last war. Tell her my little bit of news (from the nice French officer)—that peace was signed to-day at Versailles, same as 1871. We both think neither version true, and that the French Army is still fighting on the Loire. Wish we knew the truth. Darby says she has spent most of the evening talking to Lucien, who is furious with the doctors and the lack of organization in the hospital. I have not formed any definite opinion of the doctors yet; at the moment they are just curious phenomena.

Talking about unpleasant characters, I think the German corporal ought to be given a certain amount of rank. We both think that had he been brought up under a different régime he would probably have been better. The Nazi régime must bring out all the cruelty that one has.

The baker is in a mess because he has given up his bed to a *semi-blessé* and has no idea where he can sleep. He can't find a mattress or any straw. He has told the doctors, but they say it is entirely his own concern.

Announce I've smoked my last cigarette. Darby says I'll have to give up smoking. I don't think so; have hopes that the baker can scrounge some for me, and tell her he is going to wash *both* my shirts to-morrow. She says, "Do ask him to do

one of mine." Tell her I doubt if he will have enough water, but as I have a beautiful nature I will ask him.

Darby hangs all her *grands blessés'* towels out of window, as she doesn't think it can be too healthy having them lying about the room. Talking of linen, I ask Darby if she has wondered why it is that the doctors, Mademoiselle, ourselves, for that matter, and quite probably the *infirmiers* all have two sheets on our beds, when the *grands blessés* have none. She says it's beyond her—I think this hospital beyond any one.

SATURDAY, JUNE 22ND

Wake up with eye bunged up. Think of the Man with Sore Eyes and hope it's just a mosquito bite. Darby says it looks a bit odd. With my hand I simply refuse to work in the surgery. Now that there are a few civilians back discuss the possibilities of escape. Darby thinks the chances are almost nil. I don't agree.

Wash *blessés*—difficult with one eye and one hand! Soliloquize on bath three-quarters full of water for two hundred and fifty people.... There is so much water in the world—it's falling all over the world.... There are the Niagara Falls, the Victoria Falls, innumerable falls—yet all the people watching these falls or near these falls have no conception of just how precious water can be. There are people all over the world at this moment lying in a bath full of water, who probably lie in a bath full of water twice a day, and as they let that water run down the sink they do not realize for one second its importance.... I think every one should be taught to realize the value of the necessities of life.... Far, far too much is taken for granted....

Leave off soliloquizing and find Darby, as it is lunchtime.

Lunch—pea soup and four little plums. Still hungry. We go to our bedroom, and I eat my last two biscuits and wonder why I'm so hungry. Darby says it's probably worms; I think it's because I've not smoked since last night. (Haven't seen the baker yet.) Hope that giving up smoking hasn't made me perpetually hungry—Darby says she isn't.

Go down to *grands blessés*, as I promised to give Mere Boy something to cover his head with (found some linen in a trunk in one of the rooms and have made it into squares). The men say the flies crawling over their faces are driving them mad. Mere Boy very pleased with *chiffon;* I give each man one. Man with Sore Eyes suddenly worse. Man without a Face better; he has just been operated on and has really clean bandages, but otherwise is in an awful mess, as he has now been given a tube but no basin, so the tube leaks thick mucus on to his jersey.

See a German doctor walking along the corridor—he looks so *clean.* Of course, the Germans came here more or less at their ease in lorries with all their equipment, while the French doctors were taken prisoners, made to walk miles and miles, and have nothing at all. But if some of them could shave yesterday why can't some of them shave to-day? There is still some water in the bath.

Agonizing having no cigarettes—still feel hungry. Hope it isn't worms; but should think one could catch anything here. Eye much better; obviously only a mosquito. Hand still painful; thank heaven it's my left one.

Discover the *infirmiers* in the bathroom washing up our dinner plates with *our* soap which we use for washing the *grands blessés.* Depart for surgery and find a cake of soap in a cupboard, give half to Darby, and tell her in future we must

keep *everything* in our bedroom. On returning to bathroom see the *infirmiers* washing up in our ward-room basins. At the same time, and in the same sink, another *infirmier* is washing a bedpan. For one moment think that my stomach will not take it—however it does.

There are a Polish and a French woman in the surgery. They have been told to return to Soissons, as they live here. Both have children with fractured arms. The Germans have told them that neither France nor Poland nor any other country wanted war, except England, and it won't take them long to mop England up. Neither of the women believes this. Not realizing I am English, one of them says, "But that is not true, mademoiselle, for England did not *want* war. . . ."

Think this perpetual hungry feeling must be the urge for cigarettes. Sitting on terrace in the sun when a man comes along who says he is the official interpreter between the German and French sides of the hospital. Asks me if I should like cigarettes!!! He is rather charming; go with him to German side and get twenty Chesterfields for twenty francs. Interpreter says *most* of the Germans here are Austrians. A few like the régime, but most are forced. He also says the Germans are going gently with the French, but that they won't with the English. I explain our circumstances to him, and in the evening he suggests to the Médecin Chef that he writes a letter to the Kommandant of the hospital explaining how it is that we are here and that we are *ambulance* drivers. The Médecin Chef says he will write the letter to-morrow.

Find Darby to tell her about letter. We go to the surgery for her to dress my hand—it's quite a nasty cut—and find the kitten dead in a cupboard. Tell Darby I refuse to work in the surgery even when my hand is better—to me it's the end.

Watching the bandages which have stuck to the wounds being wrenched off without the help of even *eau oxygénée.*

The baker gives me our shirts, and, all things considered, he has washed them very well. I talk about escaping; he is most kind and helpful and says we must have a car. He is pretty sure that ——, who lives at —— near-by, has a car, and thinks he can get in touch with him. But before we *fout' le camp* he thinks it would be better to wait till more civilians return. He will say I am his wife, who has come to fetch him.

Remark how clean the German nurses look. He says they have plenty of *hot* water and their wounded have everything essential, and quite a lot of things which aren't. We are joined by two German Protestant priests: one is short and rather amusing, the other is a tall, solemn thing. The little one says that in the last war he was a prisoner in Egypt for over a year; then he was sent to England for the duration. Answers "Yes" to usual questions. He says he likes English officers, and will never forget roll-call every morning. "Gentlemen, roll-call, please." "Thank you, gentlemen–thank you." Up till the outbreak of the present war he still corresponded with English friends in Egypt and England, and he thinks the whole world ought to be friends. Say this is quite an international gathering–German, French, and English. Baker says, "And God for all." The short one gives me his address and asks me to write him after the war. I say I will. We shake hands and say good-by. The Solemn Thing gives me the Nazi salute. Very surprised, but manage to bow.

Find Darby in bed. Tell her about escape with baker, and that she *must* get a dress and coat from the cottage and we will try to make Paris. Darby thinks all the English banks will be closed. Agree, but say we must get out of this at all costs. She

says if we do get to Paris she can't see the end. Neither can I, but if we don't get to Paris I can't see the beginning.

The man underneath us with gangrene groans and groans. Tell Darby I heard the doctors arguing about who should give a man with his leg just amputated a morphine injection. It was the Cherub—one of the nicest of them—who did not argue, but said he would. Darby says she thinks the mosquitoes are getting as bad as the flies. Cats screaming outside, and shots ring out. I say I think they are shooting at the cats. Darby says, "Don't be a damn' fool." More shots and more screams. (Too sleepy to argue with Darby.)

SUNDAY, JUNE 23RD

Little more water in bath than usual, so decide to tackle the *grands blessés* feet. Some seem quite shocked at the idea, but am quite adamant. Realize that nothing can be done without a scrubbing-brush, so down tools and say I'll search the hospital until I find one. See two scrubbing-brushes in one of the doctor's bedrooms and take one of them. There is nothing to be done with the feet except scrub and scrub and scrub. Quite a comedy, as some of the men say they are ticklish.

Decide to start the battle of the shirt. Man without a Face is much better; the flesh looks as though it is healing quite well, and his one eye looks less swollen. But his jersey is now THE END; the smell which emanates from it is also the end. Start battle by going into surgery and taking away a pair of scissors. (Doctors ask me why I want them. Pretend not to have heard and very rapidly decamp with scissors.) Cut the man's jersey *and* vest down the back, pull the lot off from the front, and throw it into a bedpan. Wash the man's chest, which is covered with mucus, and cover him up in his blanket.

Find Mademoiselle and explain that the man may at any moment die of pneumonia and that he *must* have a shirt. (Will give her one point and one only–she *is* concerned, up to her capabilities, about the *grands blessés.*) She says there is not such a thing in the hospital. Think I may find something in the cottage, and rummage around in the linen cupboard. Find some extraordinary-looking garments which I think must be some kind of women's long cotton bedjackets. They will do. Hear footsteps and see two German soldiers approaching. Remember the German corporal said there would be a row if any one was found pillaging in the cottage. Have world's greatest brainwave. As there is no time to hide, seize some articles of intimate use lying on a shelf and wave them at the soldiers when they enter. They seem taken completely off their guard and depart without a murmur. Continue rummaging around; find an entire packet of the things, and also a jar of sugar. Depart with the whole lot, give sugar to Jean, and put the extraordinary-looking garment on Man without a Face; it does quite well as a shirt. Get two safety-pins (out of Darby's knapsack) and pin a bib round his neck. Give Jean four and tell him he *must* change them at least every three hours.

The official interpreter comes into the ward with the German corporal. The corporal says England forced France into war. The *grands blessés* just laugh.

Mass is said by a French priest in the ward and also in the chapel.

Sit on terrace in the sun. The baker joins me and tells me he has two girl friends whom he walks out with (one is a *coiffeuse*, the other works in a restaurant), and also a *petite amie.* He says he will not marry till he has found "*le grand amour.*"

He is very intrigued to know if I'm engaged or not. Have certain amount of fun pulling his leg, but, as he is only a Big Baby with no brains and a big heart do so very mildly.

Mademoiselle comes along and says two new *semi-blessés* have arrived from Douai who have seen two *jeunes filles* there dressed similarly to us. From the description we think they must be Otto and Lloyd Bennet.

Lunch—meat. It is awful, but nevertheless it is meat. Also have fruit in jars and some red wine. Darby and I go up to our room to sleep; I say she *must* get some civilian clothes from the cottage; it's of no importance whether they fit or not—in fact, if they don't all the better; they will look more refugee-ish.

We discuss *why* the doctors (with few exceptions) seem to be so utterly uninterested in us. We both think it's possibly sour grapes because England has not capitulated; also possibly they are too wrapped up in their own troubles. Tell Darby she really *ought* to shake hands with them at breakfast. She says she sees no reason whatever why any one should be expected to shake hands *every* morning, especially when the hands happen to be particularly dirty—and at breakfast! I say quite—but it simply is one of the customs of France, and she probably annoys them no end by *not* doing so. When in Rome, etc. She says she will make an effort in future.

The baker has found two bottles of *vin ordinaire* in the cellars. We go into a room, drink wine, and smoke cigarettes. Afterwards I get some fruit from the garden (no German soldiers about) and give this to the baker. After dinner sit on terrace (it's a heavenly evening). Comedy of German soldiers trying to find the *vin ordinaire* in the cellars! Darby strolls off with Lucien. The baker discourses on *la jeunesse*. We go and

sit on a bench in the garden. I have come to the conclusion that I am unshockable, for was only amused when he brought out of his pocket six contraceptives and showed them to me with great pride, saying, "*Ils sont encore tout à fait en ordre.*" He told me he was taken prisoner while swimming a river with three *copains*. They were half-way across when the Germans yelled at them to swim back or they would shoot. The baker turned, but his *copains* continued to swim on. They were shot at and were drowned. They were his best *copains*.

Go to bed quite late. Darby says Lucien is resigned and is quite sweet about her lack of enthusiasm for his *amour*.

The man beneath our room groans and groans all night. Don't think he can live much longer.

MONDAY, JUNE 24TH

No tea or coffee at breakfast. Mere Boy suddenly got fever (hope it's not the beginning of gangrene). Sore Eyes same as usual. No Face better. After the battle of the shirt it's quite simple getting him clean sheets, as Jean helps, but he has not changed the bib; tell him he *must* every three hours.

Lunch—weak tea and cabbage water. The doctors at last get tired of saying "*Tant pis*" and send a poilu over to German side to ask for more. After long time he returns with large tub containing floating rice. Go to bedroom to sleep, as feel starving hungry. The baker comes in and gives me two large tins of bully beef, six cigarettes, small bottle of *vin ordinaire*. Unfortunately, Mademoiselle comes in, so have to share. Ask her to leave a *little* for Darby. Afterwards the baker tells me he gave Mademoiselle and the doctors two large tins of bully beef at lunchtime, which they have obviously kept to themselves.

Go German side with Mademoiselle and the baker. We meet the official interpreter, and get some stores from a narrow, long room stocked like an ironmonger's, and with a German corporal in charge. Mademoiselle asks for bedpans, twenty knives and forks, spoons, etc. They are all put in a wooden box which the baker carries.

As we leave the room the interpreter whisks off one of the tables a packet of cigarettes. He does it so quickly and neatly that should think *en civil* he must have been a pickpocket. He divides them (behind Mademoiselle's back) between the baker, himself, and me.

Mademoiselle asks if there is anywhere where she can get some *eau oxygénée*. The interpreter takes us to the drug-room, in charge of a rather nice-looking officer. The room is packed with all kinds of disinfectants, and there are rows of shelves with jars of ether among other things. The officer says Mademoiselle can have some *eau oxygénée*, but he has no jar in which to put it. Mademoiselle says "*cette jeune fille*" can fetch the empty jar in the French surgery. She says "*jeune fille*" in such a way that it might have meant anything from a streetwalker to a bitch. The officer looks round to see to whom she is referring, and I explain she means me, whereupon he says something in German to a soldier and explains to Mademoiselle he has told the soldier to fetch the jar. I was entirely indifferent who fetched the jar, but watched with intense amusement Mademoiselle going all flustered.

Return to French side and soliloquize on the doctors: if Mademoiselle can go and get disinfectants and, apparently, whatever stores she wants from the German side, why can't the doctors? I do not believe that they have made any attempt to do so. If this is true—*then,* Messieurs les Médecins, may the

sufferings of your wounded, your dead, and your dying be your share of Hades—if there is a just God of this world, may it be so.

Play bridge on terrace with Jacques and Co. Ask the Médecin Chef if he has written the letter to Kommandant of hospital. He says he has had no time to-day, but will write tomorrow! As an excuse to get away, say I must fetch *grands blessés'* towels, which are drying. The doctors say I am charming to have washed them! Sit on the garden bench with the baker, on the German side, and about eleven o'clock we are joined by the official interpreter, who asks me to call him Henri —do so. Baker tells him his idea about car to Paris; he thinks it a good one, and will *fout' le camp* with us. As most Germans have only slight knowledge of French, Henri thinks they would take me for French. He has a flat in Paris and thinks he could arrange to get the necessary papers for me to live there. Explain I have no urge to stay in Paris—my Mecca is England. He thinks England out of the question *pour le moment*, and after Paris—*qui sait?*

I say Darby may want to come with us—Henri says she *must* make up her mind, as we may have to *fout' le camp* suddenly —one never knows. Have we any civilian clothes? Thinks it would be better for us to be dressed as *infirmières;* would Mademoiselle lend us anything? Explain that not only would she never lend us anything, but if we asked her and she had any idea we were going to escape she would be quite capable of informing the Germans.

Go to bed late, and tell Darby she must make up her mind. She says it is doubtful if Huffer is in Paris; she can not see how we can make England without money or papers; and she doesn't think we've a hope in hell from *any* banks. Tell her,

as far as I can see, we can definitely get to Paris, and Henri says he will probably be able to get me papers. Personally wouldn't know if he really can or can not—people are apt to talk a lot of blah; but I have no doubt in my mind that the baker and Henri will get us to Paris—after that imagine it would be a question of *sauve qui peut.* But, in any case, have definitely made up my mind to *fout' le camp*—and that's that. Darby says she will think it over and let me know. Tell her what with the baker and Henri thrown in life is becoming *un peu compliqué;* Darby says that's entirely my own fault. Tell her I'm not discussing faults, but merely that a *vie compliquée* can become difficult—at times.

Man underneath is silent—should think he's dead.

4

The Snake in the Grass

TUESDAY, JUNE 25TH

Only a little bully beef for breakfast. Am still very hungry. Go with Henri to fetch bread from the bakery and *en route* call at a garage for petrol. A German there becomes very fresh with me. Henri furious; "If one asks Germans for anything they behave like pigs." The bread is not yet ready, and the bakers invite us to lunch. They have been taken from the hospital and told to get the bakery going for the Germans. They sleep over it, live entirely by themselves, and have a very good time. We have a magnificent lunch of veal, chip potatoes, and Rhum tart. The tart was something only French *pâtissiers* can make. I told them my *copaine* Darby had been dreaming of such a tart for a long time. One baker refused his share, and as we left he pushed a small packet into my hand—"*Voilà la tarte pour votre copaine.*" He said he could easily bake himself another.

Went to sleep after lunch.

The bakers have invited Darby, Henri, the baker, and me to dinner. It is as good as the Pavillon Royal. They've even picked some flowers and put them on the table. On the way back to the hospital Darby says she has decided to stay here; my ideas are too risky. Well, that's that. I shall *fout' le camp* when the time comes. Spend the evening with Henri.

We lunch again at the bakery and run out of cigarettes. Henri sends a baker across to the garage with three loaves and a note in German asking for four packets of cigarettes in exchange. The cigarettes arrive, and Henri launches into the story of how he was captured. While retreating he lost his regiment, and joined up with another, which also became scattered. For days he wandered about trying to find another regiment; when he found one they were immediately ordered to climb through a wooded hill and take a plateau above it. He climbed half-way up, but was so tired through lack of sleep and food that he went to sleep. One of his *copains* woke him and told him they were all retreating. As he got out of the woods a piece of shrapnel hit his cartridge belt; had he not had it on, the shrapnel would have gone through his stomach. Actually it completely winded him and caused an internal injury. He again wandered about for several days, and at last found a hospital. He collapsed on arrival, and was put to bed. When he came to he realized that the hospital had been evacuated and he had been left behind. There was no food or water, but he managed to crawl down to the cellars and opened several bottles of champagne, which made him pretty drunk. Later he crawled to the next village, which he found was in the throes of being evacuated. He joined a crowd at the railway station; they were told there would be a train in a few minutes. The Germans arrived instead, mowed down every one in the streets with their tanks, and captured the station, Henri, and the rest of the soldiers. Henri was sent to Soissons Hospital. Before he arrived there, however, he was kept for some time with the captured French Army. He was in a group of about two thousand and they were marched about for days, and had practically nothing to eat. They were resting in a

field, and Henri, who could speak German fluently, asked an officer if he could take a lorry to a village they had just marched through to fetch some tinned food which he had seen in a half-bombed shop. He went with a guard and the baker, whom he had met for the first time that day. They returned with a considerable amount of tinned food, but as soon as the French officers (majors to lieutenants) realized it they swooped down on the lorry and tried to commandeer the whole lot. I told Henri I did not believe his story, but the baker confirmed it word for word. I could not understand how officers could behave like that. It could never have happened in the British Army; the officer in charge would have seen that any food was absolutely fairly shared out. . . . Henri and the baker have a pretty poor opinion of French officers in general.

The bakers give us seven loaves for the *grands blessés*, which we distribute. Mere Boy is very ill, with a raging fever; No Face is much better; Sore Eyes is actually sitting up in bed, and his eyes look more or less all right.

Two more men have been put on my side of the ward: a very clean, good-looking one with his right arm bandaged from shoulder to wrist, and a man on a mackintosh sheet whom I look at in astonishment. He has a raging fever, and sweat pours off his body. He is naked except for his stomach, which is entirely bandaged. Jean says a bullet has gone through his bowels; he was brought into the ward from the surgery on the sheet, and he says he can't interfere. I tell Jean he should have a little mackintosh just underneath his bottom; obviously he should not be left like that. But there he is, poor devil, with a raging fever, living and dying on a clammy mackintosh sheet.

Bakery for dinner. Henri says most of the Austrians are

going and Prussians will take their place; we wonder how we shall fare.

We have a most amazing evening, with plenty of heavenly food. Seven or eight Austrians come in with several bottles of wine, branches of cherries, and an accordion. They play and sing many old Viennese waltzes, including, of course, *The Blue Danube*. We dance in the glow of the bakery fire, and Darby and I are fairly waltzed off our feet. What a change to have a cheerful evening. The Austrians, who sing as well as they dance, give us the *Horst Wessel Song*, which I hear for the first time; it has rather an attractive tune, but the evening has an unfortunate ending when they sing *We March against England*. We are furious, and I try to butt in with *Rule, Britannia*. Darby and I tell Henri we are going back to the hospital, and the party breaks up. Henri and I sit in the cellars of the hospital and hear German soldiers marching about overhead.

At breakfast Mademoiselle asks where we eat nowadays. We tell her at the bakery. She looks pretty sick when I say that last night we had *poulet à la reine*. When we go to lunch at the bakery she follows us with her boy friend, and several French doctors turn up too, which causes an *éclat*. This evening, *grâce à* Mademoiselle, a Prussian is to be stationed at the bakers', and after to-day no one will be allowed there any more.

Spend some of the afternoon with the *grands blessés*. Mere Boy is very weak and ill; he is as thin as a rake now, and has been crying most of the afternoon. He is quite pitiful, and far too ill to wash. The Man on the Mackintosh Sheet has gone into a coma. The Clean Man seems more or less all right al-

though his arm hurts him. He is rather sweet, and likes to be washed all over.

Henri tells me of his plans for our escape; it seems fairly simple and should work. He has arranged with the bakers to hide me in the bakery, if necessary, despite the Prussian. He is very busy, as now that the civilians are returning he has extra work to do. He has been given a *bureau* on the German side of the hospital. The streets don't look nearly so depressing with one or two people about, but Henri is very bitter because he has seen several civilians raise their arms for the Heil Hitler business.

Have our last dinner with the bakers. The Prussian is already there, and is a most disagreeable creature who entirely disapproves of my lipstick and powder. In broken French he says that when Germany has reorganized France women will not be allowed make-up. I reply that to prevent it would be harder than breaking through the Maginot Line. Very sad saying good-by to the bakers. They are still seething with rage. This morning the Kommandant asked them to cook thirty chickens for him, and gave them each a packet of cigarettes. They handed all their packets to a wounded officer and asked him to distribute them among the *grands blessés*. Later they discovered that the officer had kept every one for himself.

On the way back ask Henri why the Germans are so utterly amazed at our powder and lipstick. He says in Germany women don't use it, as Hitler doesn't approve, and in any case there is not much for them to use.

SATURDAY, JUNE 29TH

I hear Brest and Saint-Malo have been badly bombed by the English. The French doctors seem amazed.

We are told to make swabs with sterilized scissors; given filthy, rusty biscuit box to put them in. Tell Mademoiselle I will not put the swabs in that filthy box and show it to the doctors, who are not in the slightest interested. Jean gives me an equally dirty box. I give it up and sit in the garden with Henri.

Darby spends the evening with Lucien in a kitchen which he is fixing up in the cellars, and which we call the Thieves' Kitchen. Later I see them outside the cottage where I did the scrounging talking to the owners, who have returned. Lucien is full of enthusiasm for the Thieves' Kitchen, which he hopes to be able to make an unofficial kitchen for the French doctors. He hopes to be allowed to leave the hospital for an hour, to find a stove and piping.

Darby is appalled by the Man on the Mackintosh Sheet. To-day he apparently came out of his coma. I had left him alone, but one of the wounded told me he wanted his feet washed. Another man with gangrene has been put in the room below us; he is groaning away....

SUNDAY, JUNE 30TH

At last the ward is swept and the *grands blessés* are given two clean sheets and a pillow-slip each.

A large swastika flag is flying in the courtyard entrance of the hospital: I should love to pull it down. Henri very busy in his *bureau*, and on the wall, facing the swastika flag, is an advertisement asking people to buy French savings bonds. The words are written across a map showing French and English possessions, and underneath is "We are too strong to be beaten." Tell Henri he should pull down either the flag or the advertisement. He takes down the advertisement. He hopes

to be free within a few days, and, if officially, will get his demobilization papers, so he would rather wait here until then and not *fout' le camp*. I don't mind waiting, but am afraid Darby and I may be whisked away somewhere without warning. Henri says he is bound to know if we are, as every order has to come from the Kommandantur, and he is there every day.

He has not get a tire yet.

Henri gives an *infirmier* 662 cigarettes for the *blessés*. He notices a huge African nigger among them, and says that it infuriated the Germans more than anything else that the French and English used black men to fight against them. I know that particular African well; he used to be unable to move, and was interesting to wash as he was so black that there was no means of telling if he was any cleaner except by the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, which after a great deal of scrubbing became coral pink. I tell Henri that if the Germans had any colonies they would probably use colored troops; in fact, I should not be surprised if that is not one of the reasons why they are screaming for colonies.

There is a story which Henri says the Germans never tire of repeating: a French ambulance was stopped by German soldiers; two French niggers jumped out; one shot a soldier dead while the other slit a second soldier's throat.... Apparently the Germans object to the Moors as much as to the Negroes.

The Clean Man, who is better, tells me they were given only three cigarettes each instead of five. Henri is furious. We have a hectic search and find the missing hundred in one of the *infirmiers'* bedrooms. We go around giving out the two extra ones. The Clean Man tells me he is an airman. I ask him what happened to the French Air Force. He shrugs his shoulders

and says he doesn't know; he thinks they mostly stayed on the ground. At his airdrome they were never allowed to take off without orders from their officers, who were seldom there. One night when two German planes came over, some Polish airmen took off (there were no officers to give orders); they chased the Germans, shot them down, and returned unharmed to the airdrome. Next day they were court-martialed. Hopeless. . . .

Meet our nice new Médecin Chef on the terrace, chat with him for a few minutes, then go to bed. Darby is already there. Tell her that Man on the Mackintosh Sheet was moved from the ward this afternoon and put into one of the little rooms near-by between an awfully nice, but very ill, poilu and a Moor who has just had his leg amputated. I think it is quite wrong to wedge his bed in that little room between those two. He is still on his mackintosh sheet, and to-day asked to be washed all over. I'm afraid he won't live for long.

The poor devil with gangrene groans away.

At breakfast we are told Germany sent an ultimatum to England to capitulate, and that England replied with poison gas. We just don't believe that story.

Darby thinks we sleep so much because all the wine we drink at meals has bromide in it to make the men keep off women. Henri says this hospital wine has no bromide in it, but that in the barracks it generally has. He says they manage *quand même*. He won't give out any cigarettes to the doctors, and so dislikes them that he makes them pay four francs for a packet of Troupe. He is longing to get to Paris, but still has no tire.

Discuss with Darby what would happen to Henri if he were caught helping me to escape. We think he might get two or

three years' imprisonment, or even be shot. She says the baker told her Henri is a "rich nobleman." I thought no one outside a penny novelette was described as such. Here it does not matter what one was; it is what one is that counts. Darby and I think it is a pity that some of the people we know aren't here. A short time in an *hôpital militaire* like this would go far to shake them out of their petty, snobbish little selves.

As usual we sleep like logs.

An appalling day. While washing the *grands blessés* notice a woman groaning on a stretcher. An *infirmier* says, "*Elle accouche*." A few minutes later she is taken away. Not long afterwards Henri dashes into the ward and yells at me to follow him. Apparently the woman was brought to the hospital several hours ago, and he thought it much the best for the Germans to attend to the birth, and ordered a room to be prepared for her in one of the empty wings. He went to see if it was ready and found the *infirmiers* had left the woman outside on a stretcher; she told him the baby was already arriving. Tell Henri I know as much as a fly about childbirth, but he drags me along. Get the woman on to the bed—she is appallingly heavy.

Tell Henri for the love of Mike to fetch the German doctors. I repeatedly say to the woman, "*Soyez calme, madame*"—to reassure myself, not her. Never been more relieved in my life when several German doctors rush into the room with masses of instruments, hot-water bottles, and nurses. Order is made out of chaos; I retire from the scene and smoke in the corridor with Henri. We hear the bleat of a brand-new baby, and Henri wants to know if it is a boy or girl. I don't care which it is; I never want to attend another childbirth. We are furious with the *infirmiers*—it is just typical of them. I go to fetch

Mademoiselle. She says she is very busy and will come later, adding that she is a V.A.D., not a maternity nurse.

Darby and I are run off our feet fetching cotton wool, basins, and a thousand and one things for the woman. We are quite exhausted by lunchtime, and I have no time to finish washing my *grands blessés*. The Médecin Chef seems to think the woman is my pigeon (as I was in at the birth). He tells me the baby must have no food for twenty-four hours, and after lunch I must get the mother milk from the German kitchens.

Wander around looking for a basin to fetch the milk in; have just found one when I am asked to wash the feet of the Man on the Mackintosh Sheet. Say I'm too busy at the moment, but am urged to come at once, as there is very little time left. I find the Man on the Mackintosh Sheet lying with his eyes crossed; there seems nothing to be done. Suddenly he fixes his eyes on me, says quite clearly, "*Merci bien, mademoiselle*," and dies. The other wounded in the room remain silent, so I leave them and wander off to the German kitchen for the milk. Meet a French doctor who thinks that in time I shall make a good maternity nurse and adds that the baby, which is apparently a girl, ought to be christened Bessy. I don't throw the basin at his head because it is too much bother to find another. The German kitchens are literally three minutes' walk away, the hospital rambles so, and to make matters worse I get amongst a crowd of German soldiers pouring along the corridor to get into the courtyard, where a German band is giving a concert for their wounded. At this very moment they are playing my favourite Beethoven sonata. We are all wedged like sardines. Something will happen soon—this is the wrong moment for me to hear Beethoven. I shall com-

pletely lose my self-control, in which case the basin will get hurled into a German soldier's face instead of a French doctor's.

I try to yell above the band, "*Excusez-moi, s'il vous plaît,*" push my way through, and eventually arrive at the kitchens quite exhausted. Bang the basin down; no one there can understand a word of English or French, so say, "*Milch, kleinen* baby, *Mutter.*" They seem to understand, and ask if I want it hot or cold. I neither know nor care. They fill the basin with tepid milk, and I push my way through the packed corridor once more. See the baker and tell him to tell Henri not to come over in the evening, as I just don't feel like seeing anyone. Give the mother her milk. The baby has been put in a cot.

At dinner the Médecin Chef says I must sleep with the mother to-night, as she can't be left alone. Also I must give her a colon douche. Tell him I wouldn't know which end to begin. He says I can learn. I reply I possibly might if some one would be good enough to show me. Get an *infirmier* to bring my bedding down to the mother's room; fortunately there are two beds in it. Am just in the throes of installing myself, when Henri arrives with some wine, and we have a cigarette in the corridor. He says he has 100,000 francs in Paris, and most of his money is abroad. He wants to *fout' le camp* to America and thinks that I ought to come with him—he believes one could enjoy one's self there. I suppose at this moment there are millions of people in this world having baths and changing for dinner; going to theaters and dances without a care in the world. I suppose white tablecloths and shaded lamps still exist, but at the moment I can hardly believe it. Tell Henri I have had enough for one day—without having

America on top of it. He goes back to the German side; I sleep with the mother—thank God the baby doesn't cry.

Leave the woman at eight o'clock; go over and have some breakfast—filthy acorn tea, bread and honey. The honey is compressed synthetic stuff which the Germans send over to us. We have heard a lot about it in England—it is very nice to eat, and I can't see much difference between this and the real thing.

Have done what I can for the woman; hang around waiting for the French doctor to show me how to give her a douche. Meet Henri outside the ward; he is fairly chuckling with laughter. Apparently the German doctors came over about nine o'clock this morning, found the woman had not had a colon douche (which they said she was to have yesterday), and told Henri to fetch the new Prussian Kommandant of the hospital to see the state of affairs for himself. The Kommandant was livid with rage, and told Henri to bring over to the so-called Maternity Ward as many French doctors as he could find; he rounded up several, and the Kommandant fairly let out at them. Henri says they looked very sheepish and as an excuse said they were upset because their soldiers did not get a proper military funeral. The Kommandant said naturally all the French soldiers could have a military funeral. Why hadn't he been told about it? In future the French would be buried in the same graveyard as the Germans.

The Man on the Mackintosh Sheet is to be buried tomorrow. Henri is in a flat spin as he thinks he has lost the key to the morgue.

At last the doctor arrives; after all the fuss the woman does not have a colon douche, but quite a simple one. Mademoiselle

deigns to change the baby's napkin; otherwise it is left alone all day.

No time to wash my *grands blessés* this morning; Darby did quite a lot of them for me. They seem very amused about the baby. The Clean Man is very worried about his arm; he says it stinks. As there are so many smells in the ward, I don't notice his wound in particular, but the matter has gone right through the bandages. The *grands blessés* generally have their wounds dressed only every other day; his was done yesterday.

There are eight flies in my glass of wine and two large ones in my soup. Simply can't eat any lunch.

During the afternoon Henri produces two bicycles, and not a word is said by the guard when we bike out of the gates of the German side. It's simply heaven riding a bike again—haven't done so for years. Henri leads the way to a large house standing in a beautifully kept garden where, he tells me, the Kommandant of the hospital and several officers live. Two officers ask us to come inside, and after passing through a well-furnished room, obviously their mess-room, we are shown into an attractive drawing-room. A bottle of excellent champagne is produced, with some biscuits and a packet of cigarettes. What a contrast to the hospital—to be here drinking champagne in these surroundings! Before we return to the hospital we bike for some miles around the town; wish we could bike to Paris, but there are too many Germans about and too many questions would be asked.

Next morning Darby has an attack of the willies. She is completely fed up and can't think what will happen to her during the rest of the war. Tell her when I get to Paris I will go around to Huffer's flat. If he is there he ought to be able to do something *via* the Red Cross. One never knows in this

life; perhaps I shan't get to Paris; Henri and I might get caught *en route;* she may in time be freed automatically and arrive home years before I do. We exchange our home addresses. The first one back will give the latest news of the others.

Darby doesn't think anything of Henri's idea of sending a car to her here from Paris. She doesn't think she'd ever get any petrol, and in any case would be stopped before she got anywhere. We have no idea how far the Germans have got in France, and she can not see how one could get out of France. She thinks all the entrances to Paris will be guarded, and doubts if Henri and I will make it.

She has sent a postcard to the finishing school she went to in Paris–usual stuff, prisoner of war, good health–and has asked the headmistress to forward it to England. Cope with the mother for a bit, and wash the *grands blessés*. The Clean Man looks very ill; he is obviously suffering from a hæmorrhage, for his arm is dripping blood. Find the Cherub, who looks at the Clean Man and has him whisked off to the surgery.

A poilu asks me to follow him over to the German side to see Henri, who has *la chasse*. Henri is in bed and very sorry for himself; he says he would rather be a *grand blessé* than have diarrhœa!! He has told the German doctor who attended him that one of the French nurses (meaning me) would look after him, so I can stay here all day, and he says he has ordered up a jolly good lunch from the German kitchens. Return to the French side to tell Darby I am 'officially' spending the day over on the German side and find her in the throes of a second attack of the willies. Lucien has just said good-by to her; he is quite fit now, and has been sent to the German barracks before going to a prison camp. No more Thieves' Kitchen. Poor Darby.

Henri says he has heard about Lucien's being sent to the barracks; one of the French doctors insisted on it. He heard it was something to do with a doctor being jealous of Lucien. I say that it's utter nonsense, because I know for a fact that Darby loathes all the doctors; they speak to her hardly at all—they haven't from the beginning. Henri says that's the story he has heard, but as soon as he's up he'll get Lucien out. He has masses of chits for the Kommandant to sign every morning; the Kommandant hardly glances at them, and he will slip one in to release Lucien from the barracks. He says he must get up to-morrow, as he must know what is happening over at the Kommandantur.

We have an incredibly good lunch, steak and kidney pie. Tell Darby about Lucien. She is amazed about Henri's story, which she says is fantastic. I think it incredible too; what snakes one can find in the grass! . . . It wouldn't surprise me if one of the doctors was having his own back because Darby would not shake hands at breakfast.

Have dinner in Henri's room; his two Alsatian *copains* join us. They think German rule over the north of France will make the French wake up. We discuss the story of England and France fighting each other, and if it can be true that England has sunk the *Dunkerque* and other French ships. We can not believe that England and France can now be fighting each other.

Henri says he will get up to-morrow. I return to the French side and as usual sleep like a log. First thing in the morning get the Clean Man a packet of cigarettes. His right arm has been amputated; he looks very ill. A most officious Prussian comes in to Henri's *bureau* and in French starts a tirade against Churchill and Eden. I tell him had he them both here and

shot them dead it would not make the slightest difference to the war. England is solidly against Nazism. The Prussian doesn't believe many people in England can think as I do; he can not credit there being so many fools in the world. He stalks out in a rage. The baker says I shall rue the day I spoke to a Prussian like that. Henri says he wishes I would leave my quarreling until we get to Paris.

We have lunch, Darby as pleased as pleased that Henri has got Lucien back. Lucien asks us to have some wine in the Thieves' Kitchen. He says he hasn't much time for the English as a race, but since we are allies he would rather shoot himself through the hand than fight against us.

Darby and I sleep in the Maternity Ward, but, horror of horrors, three more mothers and babies have arrived. All the babies scream; it is not surprising, because a German soldier who had been put over here with a German nurse has gone mad and is screaming his head off. The baby in my room is trying to compete with the soldier; its mother sleeps blissfully on. Darby asks if the baby is choking; tell her I don't think so, it's just having a competition screaming match. Darby wants to know if I have "turned it over." The thought never entered my head. She turns it over, and it leaves off yelling; I think this such a brainwave that we go around turning over all the babies; we have a momentary lull till the German soldier starts them all off again. Get up and search for Henri; fortunately he hasn't gone to bed. He says he will get a maternity nurse from the refugee camp which has come into existence since the civilians have returned. We have quite a long chat—give Henri my watch to be mended and money for the tire.

SUNDAY, JULY 7TH

It's a month to-day since we swam the Marne. Meet a woman in the corridor; she tells me she is the *sage-femme.* Never more glad to see any one in my life. Take her to the Maternity Ward; she wants clean sheets for the mothers, more cotton wool, bedpans, and something to tear up for napkins for the babies. Tell her she is an optimist!!! She tells me this is the second time she has been a refugee within twenty-five years; her husband and brother were killed in the last war, her second brother is missing in this. She has just come from near Tours. The Germans there told her that France and England are at war, and that England is using poison gas. On her way here she saw trainloads of cattle being taken into Germany; she lives only twenty-five kilometers from here, but no one for the moment is allowed to go farther than Soissons. About a thousand refugees are now lodged in a girls' school; they get very little food.

Wash the *grands blessés*, who tell me the Clean Man died in the night. They all seem to think that the armistice between France and Germany has been signed; they can not understand why they are not freed. Tell them that even if an armistice is signed it will take months before a peace is agreed upon, and I shouldn't think any one would be freed until then. The *grands blessés* are fed up to the teeth. They say they have had more than enough of being here. They are not even amused at all the babies being girls. They say that in the next war France will have to fight with women.

Mere Boy, No Face, and Sore Eyes all much better. The *grands blessés* say that two of the *semi-blessés* who have recovered got hold of some civilian clothes and have escaped. They wish they were well enough to do the same.

I read *Le Matin* to-day for the first time. It is very anti-British. It had a long article on "England, where is your honor?" According to them we have none. Most of the French think it is just German propaganda, and the French are still fighting the Germans in Syria. They think their Government has committed a double crime. First in not seeing the Army was sufficiently well armed; secondly, knowing the lack of arms, to declare war at all. In the evening Henri takes me to a café which has just been opened for the Germans opposite the hospital. He and his German *copains* have beer; I have a brandy.

On the way back Henri tells me that with any luck he hopes to be free on the 14th of this month. There is a rumor, which he thinks is true, that the Germans and French have come to an arrangement. All the Alsatians and the men from Lorraine are to be freed. The Germans will release the Red Cross personnel. Henri says the Germans have told him without any sarcasm that they can not understand how France could have thought of war against Germany with such a slipshod army. Return to the hospital and discuss with Darby possibilities of throwing a dinner party to-morrow. Sleep with the *sage-femme* in the Maternity Ward.

Lucien says he can get and cook some soup, meat, and potatoes. Henri, his Alsatian *copain*, and the baker say they would all love to come to our party. We tell Lucien dinner for six at eight.

In the middle of lunch a message comes from the Kommandant that all the staff are to line up outside the surgery. We are quite a collection; ten doctors, the dentist, the priest, about eighteen *infirmiers*, Mademoiselle, Darby, and myself.

The Kommandant strides down the corridor, followed by

an officer in full regalia—cap, cloak, and eyeglass; they are followed by Henri. The Kommandant speaks in German, each sentence being interpreted by the officer, and says, "France, where is your culture? I have heard of it, but I do not see it. This wing of the hospital looks and smells like a cage of monkeys, and I demand that it shall be cleansed. I give you twenty-four hours. I make you all entirely responsible to your Médecin Chef. Should this wing not be thoroughly cleansed by that time all of you will be put on a diet of bread and water, and half of you will be sent to concentration camps. I have not told you to do this work for us, but for your own wounded."

Lucien, Jean, Darby, and I couldn't agree with the Kommandant more. Jean says, *Mais, que voulez-vous?*... Some of us do try to do the work of three people, others do nothing at all." Of course there is no organization at all on the French side. No one here seems capable of leadership or responsibility. Our new Médecin Chef is a dear, but he has let the hospital continue as he found it.

All the afternoon the *infirmiers* are busy sweeping and dusting, emptying and burning bucketfuls of filthy dressings, cleaning out cupboards in the corridors. Lucien says he can't possibly cook our dinner for to-night, as he has been told to supervise all the cleaning. I am glad, for he has an eye like an eagle and will stand no nonsense from any one. Lucien ought to have been a general. In fact, I don't think the French Army would have gone to pieces at all had there been a few Luciens in command. He has been reduced to the ranks for knocking a fellow-officer unconscious. During the afternoon our wing gets cleaner and cleaner.

Simply don't recognize our wing in the morning. It is, as it

must be, rough and ready, but it is clean—it is *clean!* There is even flypaper hanging up in the *grands blessés'* ward and rooms. My personal objection to this is that there are so many flys on the paper that they make a tremendous noise trying to get off. It's like the continuous hum of a dynamo. All is roses in the garden; in fact, Jean has picked several and brought them into the ward.

Lucien says he can manage the dinner for to-night.

Henri sends Darby and me three toothbrushes (she wants one for Lucien), toothpaste, soap, cigarettes, and matches from the German stores. We have to pay 52 francs for them, but what treasures we have! None of the wounded have cleaned their teeth for months.

Darby and I spend a hectic day; we entirely transform our bedroom. Scrounging in the isolation ward, which has hardly been touched since it was evacuated, discover the nuns have left their petticoats behind. They are incredibly voluminous affairs made of thick, heavy crochet. We decide they will make bedspreads and will also go over our washstand. We find a thin lace curtain which will do us proud as a table-cloth. From the Maternity Ward we pinch a white table and six white chairs. From a cupboard we get flower vases, and fill them with rhododendrons and roses.

Darby simply excels herself in brainwaves by suggesting that we should get six glass blocks used under the beds in the Maternity Ward. We wash them, and they make marvellous ash-trays. The bakers send us masses of freshly baked loaves, Jean gives us all the cutlery and plates we want and four bottles of wine. Still more bottles are promised by Lucien and Henri.

Mademoiselle is very curious to know why we have been carrying chairs and tables about.

The party is an enormous success; Lucien produces some excellent soup, *entrecôte*, and *pommes frites*. We make merry far into the night....

Henri casually announces that the maternity nurse left this evening, as she wasn't paid. The Germans didn't force her to stay, and she said she would not work under such conditions for no money. We now have six mothers and six practically brand-new babies; they obviously can't be left alone in the ward cut off from every one. Henri carries down some blankets for me; I'll spend the night there, Darby can tomorrow.

Henri says he was terribly worried yesterday, as he thought we should get separated. The Kommandant was so furious at the filth of the hospital that he threatened to send all the *grands blessés* to Paris, have the *semi's* looked after on the German side, and send the entire French staff off to prison camps. However, Henri says that by using all the tact he knew he managed to persuade the Kommandant to give the French a chance to clean up.

In the morning I find an old poilu in charge of the Maternity Ward. There is no one to help him, but he seems quite happy and says he would rather do this job than be sent to the barracks or a prison camp. I give up the struggle, advise the mothers to get out of here as soon as they can, and go and wash the *grands blessés*.

Am told the Kommandant wants to see Darby and me at once in the surgery; realize he may have made a tour of our wing and that I don't know how many empty wine bottles must be left in our bedroom. Meet Darby *en route* to surgery

and tell her at all costs to get rid of the bottles while I try to hold the Kommandant meanwhile. Mademoiselle is there; the Kommandant and Henri have a rapid conversation in German; Darby joins us in record time. The Kommandant and Henri leave, Henri too official for words—he just didn't know me. We wonder what it's all about.

In the afternoon Darby and I are told Henri wants to see us in the Médecin Chef's office. He wants to see our passports and papers. I manage to get in half a word with him; he tells me there is something in the wind and thinks we may be freed shortly; hopes to find out more by to-morrow.

Next day while washing the *grands blessés* Jean tells us we are again wanted in the Médecin Chef's office. He tells us he has received orders that we are to be ready to leave the hospital in half an hour. He can not tell us why or where we are going. He says he has heard some rumor that we have said unpleasant things about the Germans.

Deep in thought, we return to our bedroom. Can our departure possibly be due to my conversation with the disagreeable Prussian or is it connected with the rumor of the exchange of Red Cross personnel? We collect all our belongings scrounged from villas, barracks, and hospital; Lucien ties them up for us in our ambulance blanket; it becomes heavy and unwieldy like a peasant's bundle. Lucien is very concerned about us; he doesn't think we have a chance of being freed, and presses us to take back the 100 francs we had given him for the food last night. Darby and I flatly refuse. I feel quite rich; despite the money I have given Henri for the tire, I still have 1,000 francs left.

Meet Henri in the corridor; he looks slightly green. He keeps telling me we are to be freed, but seems terribly worried

in case we lose contact with each other. His one hope seems to be that he can check up our movements from the Kommandantur. He wanted to come with us as interpreter, but guards have already been ordered to take us. He suggests my leaving behind something in his *bureau* so that he can take it over to the Kommandantur and make inquiries about us right away. Leave him my purse with 100 francs.

Darby and I feel more than depressed. As a parting gift, Henri gives me four packets of Troupe cigarettes and two boxes of matches, and the baker a little Father Christmas which he got off a Christmas cake last year. Henri has another brainwave. Suggests I pretend to be ill and he will get one of his *copains*, a German doctor, to verify it. He still seems to think in a few days we shall be free, but says I must not leave Soissons. Tell him I'll try to throw a fit over at the Kommandantur.

Darby and I leave the Hôpital Militaire in blazing sunshine to the strain of *The Blue Danube*, which the soldiers in the sentry house are playing on the gramophone. Our guards, carrying our bundles, accompany us in silence; we wave goodby to the bakers as we pass the bakery.

I had hoped to see the nice Hoch Kommandant with whom we dined, but no one at the Kommandantur speaks a word of French or English. Darby and I are ushered into a small room where a soldier clicks away on a typewriter. We are told to sit down; there are several guards in the room, and the Kommandant of the hospital. Rapid conversation in German, infinite clicking away on the typewriter—we have simply no idea what it is all about. The Prussian with whom I had discussed Churchill comes into the room, but leaves within a minute. A soldier tells us to follow him; none of them makes

any attempt to pick up our peasant's bundles, so Darby and I drag them along. We are led out into the street to a waiting car. A soldier arranges our things in the back, and an officer who is apparently in charge of us tells us to get in.

I make a last futile effort to get them to understand that I want to see the Hoch Kommandant of Soissons. The officer seems to understand, but shakes his head. Darby thinks the Germans now seem hostile toward us. I tell the officer I have left my money with Henri at the hospital and ask if we can go back. Again he shakes his head.

The car starts. We leave Soissons. Darby and I are speechless.

Laon 15 kilometers, 7 kilometers, 3 kilometers—Laon! We drive up to the Hochkommandantur and are told to get out and follow a soldier to a bare room furnished with only a large table and a couple of chairs. Another soldier brings our luggage, and a most imposing guard, complete with tin helmet, revolver, and rifle with fixed bayonet, is left in the room. He is perfectly divine. He does his little paces up and down the room, then halts stiffly to attention and gazes out of the window with an expressionless face. Then does his little paces up and down the room again. He seems a beautiful automaton; I can hardly take my eyes off him. A sergeant comes in and asks if we have eaten. We fairly yelp for food, and are brought bread and butter and salami sausages, with two bottles of Vichy water.

Smoke innumerable cigarettes. Darby and I are still speechless.

The sergeant tells us we are to wait for the Hoch Kommandant. We wait seven hours. Each hour the guard is changed and hour by hour they become less military; our last guard is

minus his tin helmet, revolver, rifle, and fixed bayonet, and even sits down, smokes a cigarette, and talks to us. He was taken prisoner in England during the last war. Answers "Yes" to our three usual questions.

Darby and I get more weary and more depressed, and we are beyond discussing what is going to happen now.

At last we are told to leave. The guard picks up our bundles, and we follow him down the stairs and meet the Hoch Kommandant of Laon on the landing. Thank heaven he speaks a little French. He tells us he has no idea what is to be done with us, but thinks we may be sent to Paris. Explain that I have left my money with the official interpreter at Soissons and ask if I can write to him for it. He says I can write to-morrow. We are bundled into another car, and off we go again with another officer in charge.

Dusk is falling; Laon is utterly deserted except for a few soldiers. It looks very desolate; no civilians have yet returned. After a few minutes in the car we stop outside a large building and are told to get out. The building is fairly bristling with soldiers; I think this is also a hospital, as in the distance I see something which looks like a nurse.

With two soldiers carrying our bundles we follow the officer through innumerable courtyards and a dank, dark passage into a very small courtyard. In the failing light we can just see two wooden doors with heavy iron bolts. The officer opens one—a stretcher is all it contains.

Darby says, "Good God, Myers, cells!"

Darby is told to go in, but we insist that we must be together. At last the officer tells one of the soldiers to fetch two mattresses from a shed opposite; together with a blanket they are thrown into one of the cells and cover the entire floor

space. A soldier brings us each a cup of tea and two plates of pork; it is very good. The door is banged to; it has a steel peephole bolted from the outside, and the only possibility of getting light or air is from a small grille with stout little iron bars.

Darby and I think this The End, more so when we realize that the cells have not been used for years and years. The bolts are very rusty, and, despite all the shouting and commotion outside, the soldiers can not bolt them. After a few minutes we hear them hammering us in. It reminds me of the last act of *Aïda*.

There is no accommodation whatever in our cell; only one of those "*Hommes*" things in the courtyard, which smells abominably. I should imagine at some time or another these were old wine cellars, for the ceiling is low and arched, the walls are of stone and several feet high. The cemented floor is the only modern touch. If my arms were two inches longer I could stretch from wall to wall, and if Darby were a few inches taller her head would touch the dome of the roof.

We discuss the past, present, and future. Darby still thinks our being here may be something to do with my altercation with the Prussian about Churchill. I think that may or may not be so, but I also think that amongst the doctors at Soissons there is a snake in the grass who again may have raised his head.

It was a most curious thing that Lucien was so suddenly wafted off to the barracks. It is equally curious that we have been so suddenly wafted here. Snakes are venomous creatures . . . and there is no getting away from it; there is one at Soissons. I should like to know what he has been up to.

Darby and I are faintly pleased that the Hoch Komman-

dant of Laon thinks we may be sent to Paris. Surely Paris means freedom. Laon is the last straw, as we know that from here prisoners are sent into Germany. Tell Darby even if we are sent into Germany it isn't the end of life, only the end of several years of it. Darby agrees, but thinks it's a pity it should be the end of the best years of our lives. Well, well, "It's a great life if you don't weaken."

We wonder how long we can possibly be left here and how we can pass the time. Darby has a few books in her knapsack, but it will be too dark to read much here. I can't help realizing that if the Germans want to they can keep us here for the duration of the war; there is nothing to prevent them, and no one would be any the wiser.

We can't be bothered to undo our bundles, so Darby sleeps under my greatcoat and her mackintosh, and I have a blanket. Darby keeps on saying, "Don't scratch, Myers." . . . Believe the blanket full of fleas. After she has repeated "Don't scratch" several times tell her that's all very well, she doesn't seem to have the fleas. The night is disturbed every few hours by a soldier opening our peephole and flashing a torch into our faces. I have heard nothing more harrowing than the clanking of his feet on the flags getting fainter and fainter as he leaves us in the courtyard, which is then as silent as a tomb.

I can see no point in his frequent visits, since we are so securely bolted and padlocked in from the outside, I would defy Houdini to get out of here. I believe even some of the German soldiers are sorry for us.

(End of Diary)

PART II: PRISON AND ESCAPE

5

Cherche-Midi: My Diary Seized

We were called the following morning by a soldier who brought us some tea and bread, also some hot water in a jug, which he took to the shed opposite. We were told to go there and wash. Several soldiers stood in the doorway; our washing seemed to intrigue them.

We were hammered into our cells once more. We were so confined for space and had so little air that I realized it might not be fair to smoke; however, Darby said she didn't mind. There was practically no light, and I had no inclination to continue my diary.

Every time I heard footsteps I thought it must be Henri. I did not know whether he realized that we were still prisoners. If only he were freed soon he might be able to do something for us, should he get to Paris, *via* the Red Cross. I realized I had been perfectly crazy, for I had never given him my address in London, nor got his in Paris. Darby simply could not understand why we did not exchange addresses ages ago. I could not think why either.

I asked an official who opened the peephole if I could write a letter. I explained that I had left my money by mistake at Soissons, and the Hoch Kommandant of Laon had given me permission to write. He gave me a postcard, and I wrote, "Am still a prisoner and am at Laon. Please forward the money

which I left at Soissons." Unfortunately that was all I could put.

During the morning our peephole was constantly opened by soldiers who gazed at us with the deepest curiosity. The majority could speak English or French. They seemed surprised that we should be kept in such a cell, and asked what we had done.

We told them that we had been driving ambulances for the French Government. They seemed shocked by our appalling condition, and their sole explanation was, "You must have said bad things about the Germans." They shook their heads. "You must never say bad things against the German people."

We hotly denied that we had, but we could not convince them, for they obviously thought that no one would be put into such a cell unless it were for some very grave reason. The chief crime in their eyes seemed to be criticizing the German race. If one did this I gathered they thought no punishment severe enough. They told us that German prisoners in England were very cruelly treated.

"That is not true," I said. "All our prisoners of war are fairly treated."

They shook their heads again. "We ourselves have heard stories——" they began, when I cut them short.

"You listen to stories, stories, stories! Don't you realize that it is pure propaganda?"

"But it is true," they replied, and then hitched the stories on to the Germans who, they said, had escaped from us, and had come back with the most harrowing tales.

I told them it was a curious thing that I had met many German soldiers who during the last war were taken prisoners by us, and who were now fighting. Each one had personally told

me he had been treated well, and had had plenty of food. I found I was up against a blank wall and all argument was hopeless. Incidentally, although our peephole was perpetually opened by the soldiers, we did not get much extra air or light, as it was blocked by their heads. Despite their curious point of view, they were some sort of company, which was better than being left by ourselves in solitude. Later on in the morning an officer told us that an official had been sent to Paris to find out what was to be done with us, as they had received no instructions about us in Laon.

Presumably we had the same lunch as the soldiers, for we were given tasty soup, plenty of bread, and some fruit. The afternoon passed more pleasantly; several young officers unbolted our cell, and with them we strolled about the small courtyard. They had no idea why we were imprisoned, and were very intrigued and quite friendly toward us. The easiest way to talk about Henri, I found, was to call him my *fiancé*. I asked over and over again if there was any chance of getting back to Soissons. They said they could not tell us anything whatsoever; it apparently would all depend upon what was decided in Paris. They spent as long as they could with us, and when they bolted us in our cell they left the peephole open; it made a considerable difference.

As the day drew in another official came to us. He said we must be ready to leave for Paris by six o'clock the next morning, and that we should now come under the civil authorities. He seemed to think we should be freed, for he added, "We do not make war on women." He handed me my purse, which I had left with Henri. It had been brought back by a soldier who had been sent to Soissons on an official mission. I was asked to count the money and sign a receipt for it. I knew

there would be no message from Henri; it would have been madness for him to have sent one.

So we were going to Paris, not Germany. Was it possible that we were really to be freed? "We do not make war on women" was hopeful. Paris seemed the signpost to freedom, and from this dark, cramped wine cellar appeared a glittering dream.

During the evening the word apparently went around among the Germans that we were not guilty of the unforgivable crime of "saying bad things against the Germans," for doctors, nurses, officers, and soldiers flocked to our courtyard. They let us out of our cell, and had we been an entirely new species of panda could not have been more curious about us. One officer said he would turn on his wireless so that we could hear it, to help break the monotony of the evening. He told me he would try to tune in to an English dance band. I was surprised that they were allowed to get through to an English station, as I was under the impression it was forbidden. They told us they were not allowed to listen to our news, but they frequently tuned in to our dance bands and loved listening to them.

"But don't you ever listen to our news?" I inquired.

Like so many sheep, they replied in chorus, "We are not allowed to do so."

"I suppose you never do anything you are not allowed to do?"

They shook their heads.

Their blind obedience, and their belief that what they were told to do was by far the best thing for them, simply amazed me. I can not imagine any other so-called intelligent race obeying so readily and having such blind faith and trust in their

political system. The majority thought that the war would be over within a month, and they were more than glad, they said, as most of them had not seen their wives and families for over a year and were tired of sweeping from country to country. Their one idea was to get back home.

"You English are so obstinate," their main argument ran. "Our Führer does not want a war with England; he wants peace. And all we want from you are our colonies back; they have been ours for generations. You have no right to take them away from us; give them back to us, and there will be peace."

I made no attempt to argue, as I knew the futility of it. Give them their colonies; then, besides Europe, they would want living space on the moon.

During the night the procedure was the same as before. Every two hours lights were flashed into our faces, but we hardly cared. Paris . . . "We do not make war on women" . . . perpetually rang in our ears. We were called at half-past five and brought some steaming hot tea and slices of bread with lashings of butter. The nurses, doctors, and soldiers came to have a last look at us; two soldiers carried our peasant's bundles and led the way through the dark, dank passages and the innumerable courtyards to a car waiting outside the hospital.

A brisk, monocled, typical German officer was in charge of us. He spoke very little English or French, and sat between Darby and me in the back of the car, but the soldier who drove us seemed to understand English quite well.

Soissons seventeen, ten, five kilometers–surely we were going through Soissons. I asked, and was told that we were.

"Can we stop for just a few minutes at the hospital? I do so want to see my *fiancé*, who is the official interpreter."

The officer said "No." He was quite adamant, and told me he had orders to get to Paris as quickly as possible.

Soissons.

We went through the town, and as we passed the Hôpital Militaire I found myself writhing in my seat.

A few kilometers farther, the road was blocked by a mechanized convoy, and we had to make a detour. Once we stopped and the officer produced a one-inch survey map of the district. I glanced at it as he held it on his knee. Every detail of the countryside was clearly marked; the map had been made in Germany. From it I saw that there was a clump of trees and a farmhouse on our left. I looked up to find it, and saw that it had been shelled to smithereens.

"Why," I asked, "do you want to shell so isolated a farmhouse?" His excuse was that it had been full of French soldiers.

We hastily moved on, as several dead animals were still lying about. The villages through which we passed had all been badly shelled and were entirely deserted except for a few German soldiers here and there. Just before we came to Paris the car was stopped and we were asked to get out on to the road; the chauffeur apparently had not been able to overcome his desire to photograph us.

We saw the Eiffel Tower in the distance. Paris! How good to be back.

On nearing the suburbs we found the road barricaded across and sentry-boxes placed each side. Cars in front, containing German officials, had been stopped, and their papers were being examined. We pulled up behind them, and when our turn came the officer in charge of us produced some kind of document which seemed to give us the right to enter

Paris. A large letter "K" was stuck on to the windscreen, which I presume stood for Kommandantur.

We were told we were making for the Hôtel de Crillon, which the Germans had taken over and were using as their headquarters. Neither the officer nor the chauffeur had been to Paris before, and had no idea of their way about. Darby and I directed them, and among the places of interest we pointed out lovely Notre Dame. At last we arrived at the Hôtel de Crillon. The officer went inside, and the chauffeur parked the car at the corner.

I had left Paris on the 8th of June. It was now the 13th of July. What catastrophic changes had occurred in that short time! No longer could the French people call this their capital: the swastika flag hung from all the main buildings; private cars, taxis, and buses had entirely disappeared from the streets; such cars as there were were filled with German officials, and the rest of the traffic consisted of lorries crammed with German soldiers. There seemed to be many more German soldiers than civilians in the streets; the civilians walked hurriedly with a hang-dog expression, looking neither to the left or right. Perhaps what depressed me most were the innumerable empty chairs and tables outside the cafés, which were so much a part and parcel of the streets; except for one or two Parisiennes, who, Germans or no Germans, were carrying on the customs of a lifetime, and a few German soldiers, the cafés were deserted.

After half an hour the officer returned and told us we were to go on to the Hôtel Majestic. We directed them up the Champs-Élysées, which, devoid of the usual bustling life, was pathos at its height. Again we waited outside the hotel

while the officer went in. This also was being used for official purposes and bristled with officers, soldiers, and guards.

An hour passed. We could not understand what was taking so long. Thoughts other than that we were to be freed never entered our minds; we were feeling thrilled beyond words. It was getting on for one o'clock, and we wondered if the officer realized that it was nearly past lunchtime. Would he invite us inside for lunch? He was not a convivial soul, but, since we had had so many ups and downs, it did not strike us as incongruous that he should.

Eventually he reappeared and said we were to go on to the Hôtel Letétia. Once more we drove down the deserted Champs-Élysées, and as we crossed the Place de la Concorde we pointed out Les Invalides. It meant nothing to either of our escorts until we told them of its association with Napoleon.

We asked if we could see the American Consul, if we could get in touch with Huffer, and if we could go to our headquarters in the Rue Perronet to collect our suitcases. Our officer said he thought we should be able to, and asked us if we had all our papers ready to show. We explained we had only our passports and our papers from the English and French Governments giving us official recognition as ambulance drivers under the French Government.

Once more, at the Hôtel Lutétia, we had to wait an endless time. When at last the officer returned he had a rapid conversation with the chauffeur. We set off again, but this time we were not told our destination and could not make out where we were going.

We stopped once more. Shops with flats over them on our left—down the length of the street on our right a high wall

with a guarded gateway. The officer got out of the car and disappeared through the gates. I craned my neck to see more; beyond the gates I caught a glimpse of a courtyard, and at the father end a large door over which was written in big letters "Prison Militaire."

"Do you see what I see, Darby?" But she could see nothing from where she was sitting.

"Well, we are now parked outside a *prison militaire!*" She made a slight grimace.

"Do you know anything about this place?" I asked the driver. He shook his head.

I wondered why we were waiting outside—"Prison Militaire" did not sound very healthy to me. We had definitely been told we were coming under the civil authorities. Why should our officer enter a military prison?

Five minutes, ten minutes, passed; still he did not return. After all, I consoled myself, we had already waited half an hour outside the Crillon H.Q., an hour outside the Hôtel Majestic, and an interminable time outside the Hôtel Lutétia without being taken inside, so perhaps we would not have to go in here, or, if we did, it would only be to show our papers. We had already been asked if we had them ready, but why show them here? "Prison Militaire" had an ominous ring. I found myself sighing involuntarily, and lit a cigarette.

"What's the time, Darby?"

"Nearly two."

"I'm afraid our slap-up lunch is disappearing into infinity."

As Darby made no comment we continued to sit in silence. Two soldiers approached the car and beckoned us to get out. We grasped our knapsacks and followed them, past the sentries, through the gateway, across the courtyard, through a

small door, up a narrow staircase, along an interminable corridor.

I noticed that all the windows were heavily barred. A sharp turn to the right brought us opposite a door which was also barred and which was standing ajar. The soldiers beckoned us in. The impression I had of the room through the open doorway was one of bareness, yet there were two large desks, four chairs, and a table in the center. One of the walls was lined with empty shelves. The window, like all the others we had passed, was barred.

Our officer was talking to a short man with blue eyes and a clipped mustache who, had he not been talking German, and dressed in the German field-gray uniform, would have seemed typically French. He was gesticulating with his hands in a fussy, nervous manner. The officer in charge of us utterly ignored our entry; it was the little man who, in excruciatingly bad French, told us to sit.

"Do you mind if I stand?" I asked. "I've been sitting in a car since six o'clock this morning."

"You may stand if you wish."

"Thanks."

"Now," said the little man, "all your papers, please—every piece of paper you have."

I had all my papers together. I took them out of my pocket and put them on his desk. I noticed my list of English prisoners sticking out of my passport. In case he should wonder how I came to have it, I said very slowly, to make sure he understood, "One of the officers at your Divisional Headquarters near Nogent-sur-Seine allowed me to make a list of English prisoners taken that day."

"So!"

He was fussing with the papers I had put down, and I nicknamed him there and then the "Fussy Man."

"Sign please."

I glanced at the paper he had put in front of me. It was a form printed in German, and to me it did not mean a thing.

"What does this paper mean, please?"

"It is to say that you arrived here on July 13th, 1940, and that you have surrendered to me your personal papers."

I signed. I saw my precious passport, my papers of official recognition as an ambulance driver under the French Government, together with my list of prisoners, and International driving license, disappear into a large envelop. He wrote across it "Fräulein Myers."

Some of Darby's papers were in her knapsack, and while she was going through it the officer in charge of us saw a bundle of postcards she had written.

"What are these?" he inquired sharply.

"Just postcards. I wrote them before I was taken prisoner. I've never had an opportunity to post them."

"Show them to me."

Darby handed them to him, and he glanced at several without comment.

"So!!" he suddenly ejaculated. "You wish to be the *other* side of the Rhine?"

"Oh, that means nothing. We were on the Marne then."

"So! You write your friends in England that you wish to be the *other* side of the Rhine." An unpleasant leer passed over his face. "Perhaps we shall send you there."

I could feel the silence which engulfed us. The Fussy Man suddenly laughed. "Very soon we shall be the *other* side of the Thames!"

The remark seemed to restore the officer in charge of us to a semblance of good humour.

Darby collected all her papers, which, with her postcards, were put into an envelop. She signed a form similar to the one I had signed.

Footsteps outside. A fair, brawny man and a tall boy, followed by a soldier carrying our peasant's bundles, entered the room. The soldier solemnly stood to attention, guarding them. There was general saluting to the brawny man. The tall boy sat at the unoccupied desk and swung his legs while our officer and the brawny man had a rapid conversation in German. Our officer collected his gloves and made for the door, and the brawny man accompanied him. I took this to mean that he was leaving us here. Well, that's that. . . . He went through the door without even a glance at Darby and me.

"Who is that?" I inquired of the Fussy Man, pointing to the brawny one's back.

"He is the Kommandant."

Had he announced him to be God himself he could hardly have done so in tones of greater awe.

As far as Darby and I were concerned, the Kommandant never rose in the hierarchy higher than the equivalent of Saint Peter, for it was he who ultimately helped turn the key for us the way he thought best.

The Kommandant returned to the room. I asked him in French why we were here. He made me understand that he spoke practically no French or English, and he turned impatiently to the Fussy Man to interpret. The Fussy Man seemed to go all vague and mysterious. I repeated the question, "*Pourquoi sommes-nous ici?*"

"What do you want to know?"

"*Pourquoi sommes-nous ici?*"

He either could not or would not understand. He turned to the Kommandant and spoke in German. The Kommandant turned to me, obviously asking me a question.

"It's no use," I replied in English. "I can not understand one word of German, but I do speak French."

The tall fair boy opened his mouth for the first time. "I speak a little English."

"Oh, good. I want to know why we are here."

"What means 'know'?"

"I want the knowledge of."

" 'Knowledge'—what means 'knowledge'?"

"I want the reason why."

" 'Reason'—what means 'reason'?' I can understand only little English."

"I want to understand why we are here."

The tall boy spoke to the Kommandant in German, who snapped something out to the Fussy Man, who started off in his laborious, faltering French.

"You are here till your affairs have been arranged."

"My 'affairs'? What affairs?"

The Fussy Man again went all vague and mysterious.

Our 'affairs,' I thought, can only mean the arrangement of our journey to England or a neutral country *via* the Red Cross, or our exchange for German prisoners. Failing that, and, if the worst comes to the worst, our 'affairs' must be the arrangement of our being sent to an internment camp, or, if the worst comes to the very worst, a concentration camp. Surely our 'affairs' can mean only that? Yet, as Darby and

I knew, anything is possible in this queer, mad world. Had the snake in the grass or the Prussian anything to do with this?

I realized the situation might be getting serious. Here we were in a military prison entirely run by the Germans.

"Darby, we must find out what all this is about. Do try and get some sense out of them."

She came out with the German word for 'interpreter.' I recognized the word as she pronounced it. The Kommandant nodded and gave an order to the tall boy, who swung himself off the desk and went out of the room.

"May I smoke?"

The Fussy Man inclined his head. I lit a cigarette and offered him one, which he refused.

"You'll get plenty of cigarettes here," he said.

"How long shall we be here?"

He went all vague and mysterious, and I felt I could kick him.

"Why must we stay here at all? This is obviously a prison, and we belong to the Red Cross. Why can't we work in either a French or a German hospital, as we have done before?"

"That at the moment is not possible. You must stay here."

"Why?"

I waited for him to go vague and mysterious again, and I was not disappointed. He suddenly said, "You must stay here, but you will not have to work. No one works here."

"Oh, but we'd much rather work," said Darby with feeling. "We would much rather have something to do."

The Fussy Man shrugged his shoulders. The Kommandant was leaning against the mantel-piece, looking excessively bored. Silence prevailed.

Footsteps outside. The tall boy returned with a short, swarthy man in civilian clothes, obviously French. He bowed to the Kommandant and held himself rigidly to attention.

"I want to know why we are here," I again said in French.

The swarthy one interpreted my question in apparently fluent German, and I was relieved to be in contact with some one who could understand both languages.

"The Kommandant says you must stay here till your affairs are arranged."

"Will you please ask the Kommandant what our affairs are?"

The Kommandant shrugged his shoulders, the swarthy one shrugged his.

"How long will our affairs take to arrange?"

"The Kommandant says it is impossible to say."

"But who arranges them?"

"They are arranged at the Kommandantur."

"May I write a letter?"

"To whom?"

"To my *fiancé*."

"Who is your *fiancé?*"

"A French prisoner at Soissons."

"It depends on your affairs.... If they go well, yes."

"Then not now?"

"No."

"Will my affairs go well?"

"The Kommandant hopes for your own sake that they will."

"May I see the American Consul?"

"It will depend on your affairs."

I gave it up. It was beyond me. I found I had no more questions to ask, and apparently Darby had none either, for there was a pause. The Kommandant nodded dismissal to the

swarthy one, who clicked his heels, bowed to the Kommandant, and marched out of the room.

"Put your belt on the table," commanded the Fussy Man.

"Put my belt on the table?" I heard my voice squeak in amazement.

"Yes, put your belt on the table."

He's mad, I thought, quite mad. It then flashed through my mind that there are occasions when officers have to give up their swords—but why, and where, and when? A memory of Covent Garden hovered before me. Surely Rhadames, when he betrayed the Egyptians, had to give up his. Do these idiots think my belt is the equivalent of a sword, and I the equivalent of an English officer?

"I'm not an officer," I said firmly. "I've nothing to do with the Army—I'm an ambulance driver."

"Will you put your belt on the table?"

For the first time I heard a harsh note creep into the Fussy Man's voice. I glanced at the Kommandant—he was still leaning against the mantel-piece and still looked bored. The tall boy had again seated himself on the desk and was swinging his legs. Darby muttered, "You'd better put your belt on the table. It's no use arguing."

"No! But it's so damned silly." I undid my belt, detached my leather purse, and threw my belt on the table.

"Put your purse on the table."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* It has only powder and lipstick in it."

"Put it on the table."

"Oh, all right."

"Now put your tie on the table."

"Good God! Darby, is this going to be a strip-tease act?"

"Myers, do you realize we're going to be searched?"

The horror in her voice made me look at Darby closely. I saw utter misery expressed in her face, but it was the first time I had seen real horror. Why horror? I thought. For this isn't so bad. We're only going to be searched, and that in itself doesn't mean a thing... and yet all thoughts of freedom suddenly left me. England became an island where I had once lived a long, long time ago. It was somewhere the other side of the world. Neutral countries were nebulous things in the clouds. The International Red Cross was all right, if one believed in fairies. Everything seemed very far away, except Darby and the four men in the room. I undid my tie and, without comment, put it on the table.

The Fussy Man then made me go through all my pockets and put their contents on the table, which soon became littered with a curious collection of objects. As I had two pockets in my skirt, five in my coat, and two in my shirt—all fairly full—the proceedings took some time.

"Now, is that all the money you have?"

"Yes."

He glanced at me from head to foot, and his glance remained fixed on my stockings.

"Do you want me to take them off?"

"No.... No money under your skirt?"

Heavens! I had completely forgotten my chastity belt. To admit, or not to admit?

"No money underneath your skirt?"

"Yes, I have. I'm sorry I forgot that." My excuse sounded worse than lame.

The Fussy Man looked enormously pleased.

"Well, as it's under my skirt, shall I go out of the room?"

The three men had a quick consultation. The Kommandant

barked something at the soldier who was still standing rigidly to attention over our bundles, and the four men trooped out of the room. I noticed the door had a glass panel.

"Darby, stand between me and the door whilst I hike up my skirt."

She seemed worried. "I wish I hadn't written that postcard."

"Why didn't you tear it up?"

"I wrote it such ages ago that I had forgotten about it. Besides, at the time there didn't seem to be anything in it. In any case, I never thought we were going to be searched, did you?"

"No, it never entered my head."

"Hurry up, Myers, they're coming back."

"I'm ready." My skirt was down and my belt in my hand as the three men re-entered the room. The guard remained outside.

"Now, we have all your money on the table?"

"Yes, you have *everything*."

The Fussy Man then proceeded to examine minutely all that lay before him. He fiddled around with my lipstick cases, obviously wondering if they could contain anything other than lipstick. My flapjack was opened, the filter taken out, and the powder gazed at, and so on all through the odds and ends I carried around with me. At last he seemed satisfied, and started counting my money.

"We treat our prisoners very well. You shall have all your money back. England treats all our soldiers very badly. They lose their money—it is taken away from them. We do not treat our prisoners so."

I had no idea if German soldiers were relieved of their money on arrival in England or not, but if it was taken away

from them I was quite sure that at the end of the war it would be returned to them.

"You people listen to so much propaganda which isn't true," I said. "We treat our prisoners very well."

The Fussy Man shrugged his shoulders and produced another piece of paper. I made no attempt to continue the argument; we had already learnt our lesson.

"What is this paper, please?"

"I write on it how much money you have, and you will sign." I signed, and to my surprise the Fussy Man told me to gather up all my things, with the exception of my tie and belt.

It was now Darby's turn, and she had to go through exactly the same procedure. Then I was asked to undo my knapsack. Lying on top were three sixpenny books which I had bought in Paris and not yet read. One of them was *The Escaping Club*. I had already glanced through it and knew that the theme was the various methods of escape adopted by English prisoners in Germany during the last war. As far as I could recollect the book was far from complimentary to the Germans. At a moment like this I *would* have such a book with me! However, there was nothing to be done: I put the books on the table, and the Kommandant picked them up and looked through them.

"'Escaping Club'—what does that mean?" he inquired in English. I realized that he understood more than I had thought, and so replied slowly in English. "The Escaping Club is a very old club of ours—in fact, one of the oldest. It has its headquarters in Piccadilly, and this book is all about the history of the club—how it was founded in the fourteenth century. We have lots of very old clubs in England." I prattled on. The Kommandant seemed satisfied; I breathed again.

Nothing more seemed to interest them in my knapsack until I came to my washing-bag, when my face flannel, soap, and tooth-brush were examined in turn.

It was the toothpaste of a German brand which intrigued them all.

"That was given me," I explained, "by the Hoch Kommandant of Soissons. He was a type *très chic*." I hoped the remark would sink in.

"That's a tin-opener," I told the Fussy Man, who seemed puzzled by what he was looking at.

"And what is this?" he said, pouncing on my diary.

"Oh, that's my diary. You see, so many interesting things have happened to us that I've made a note of some of them."

"Why didn't you give it up with the rest of the papers?"

"Its of no importance to any one but myself, and it amuses me to keep it. It passes the time. I don't want to give it to you now; I want to continue it while I am here."

"You must give me *all* your papers. Now, have you any more?"

"No, I haven't." He picked up my diary, which, together with my tie and belt, he put in the envelop with my other papers.

"So that is all?" he inquired.

"Yes, that's all."

He licked the envelop down. "I'm sorry to keep your diary, but if you wish to write while you are here I will send you up paper."

"Send me up paper? Where, then, will my friend and I be put?"

"I will show you very soon."

"Can my friend and I be together?"

He repeated my question in German to the Kommandant, who nodded his head.

Darby and I glanced at each other. At any rate we should be together—that was something.

Darby then had to go through all her belongings, and at last we came to the large peasant's bundle on the floor.

"There's nothing of interest in there," I said. "It's just rugs, blankets, and old clothes."

"Open it, please,' said the Fussy Man.

Darby and I undid the innumerable knots which Lucien had so neatly and carefully tied.

The contents which we had so laboriously collected looked dirty and rather sordid in the harsh light of the room. I felt rather ashamed of them.

The Fussy Man became intrigued in a pair of Darby's shoes. He started tapping the heel. The Kommandant said something to the Fussy Man which must have convinced him that the heel was not false, for he wrapped up the shoes in the dirty rag which Darby had found to pack them in.

His eyes became riveted on some packets lying at the bottom of the bundle. He picked one up, became mysterious, and demanded to know what he was holding.

"*Serviette hygiénique comprimée.*"

He became even more mysterious and took the innocent object over to the Kommandant and the tall boy. The three men examined it minutely from all angles and tried to read the writing on the packet. Darby and I both had to smile. Surely the light of day would dawn on one of them! It apparently dawned on the Kommandant, for he handed the packet back to the Fussy Man, who returned it to the bottom of the

bundle. He looked disappointed. At last everything had been examined.

We were told to do the bundle up, and Darby and I became involved in the many pieces of string and rope. The tall boy apparently could bear watching us no longer, for he came over and tied it up himself.

"Now follow me," said the Fussy Man.

Darby and I made a dive for our knapsacks. There was a general commotion.

"You can not take your knapsacks with you."

"But they've got our pajamas and everything in them."

The Kommandant barked something.

"You will not need pajamas," said the Fussy Man.

"Then what do we sleep in?"

My question was interpreted to the Kommandant, who looked amused, and shrugged his shoulders.

"You may take only one towel and your washing things."

I walked over to my knapsack, took out a towel and my washing bag, and grabbed my pajamas.

The Kommandant barked fiercely.

I concluded it was hopeless and dropped them, and with my towel and washbag walked back to the door.

Meanwhile Darby had collected her washing things, and the Kommandant handed her the three books on the table and said she might keep them.

"You can take nothing more with you," said the Fussy Man.

"But, look here, we must have a rug and an extra jersey; what shall we do if it gets cold?"

The Kommandant made a sign which I took to mean we could take a few clothes out of the bundle. Darby and I slipped

a rope off a corner and grabbed what we could. She got a shawl and a rug, and I my eiderdown, blanket, and a jersey, but we both seemed unable to realize that we were to leave all our worldly possessions behind, for despite the fact that we had taken a few things out we automatically bent down to pick the bundle up.

We were roared at by the Kommandant to put it down. He came over to us intrigued by the rope which helped to tie it together, and it was not difficult for him to separate it from the various pieces of string to which it was attached. It was a good long stout piece, and, putting it round his neck, he implied by gestures that had we taken the rope with us it might have been our intention to hang ourselves. He chuckled, and waved us out of the room.

It was Darby who held up the proceedings. She slowly crossed the room and walked over to the window where the tall boy had flung our knapsacks. We all watched her in astonishment, and there was dead silence while she opened it and with perfect *sangfroid* whipped out a toilet roll. As she walked back to us a smile gradually spread over the Kommandant's face. It was a curious smile; it started high up on his left cheek and ended at the bottom of the right-hand corner of his chin. Beneath all that brawn there seemed to be a sense of humor.

The Fussy Man was getting impatient. "Come along and follow me."

We grasped what was left to us, and I added my greatcoat as we followed him out of the room. It had been lying on a chair near the door.

We went along the interminable corridor by which we had entered.

"You really do have your moments, Darby. You were supreme when you whipped out your toilet roll."

She looked surprised. "I don't see why I shouldn't have it. It's been more than useful."

We came at last to the end of the corridor and went down a narrow staircase, through a barred door, into a large inner courtyard, which was divided by high walls and steel doors into four. Rows and rows of barred windows loomed around and above us. The Fussy Man kept on opening steel doors, which clanged behind us.

I had a feeling of utter desolation as we walked behind him, farther and farther into this impregnable fortress whose walls looked as though for centuries they had defied all attempts at escape. I could feel them encircling me; so we were to be left here in an alleged aura of mysterious "affairs" which apparently had to be "arranged." Nothing in my imagination could be worse than Laon, but, oh God! Please God, don't let them put us into cells....

I tripped over my eiderdown for the third time.

"You are making it very dirty, dragging it along the ground," said the Fussy Man, as he tucked it more firmly under my arm.

We came to a doorway which was locked and guarded by a sentry. The sentry saluted the Fussy Man, and from a large bunch of keys unlocked the door. We were faced by a wooden stairway. For the fourth time I tripped over my eiderdown, and in my efforts to gather it together I dropped the blanket.

"Give me your bundle," said the Fussy Man.

I gave it to him with a sigh of relief, and as he took it in his arms I placed my greatcoat on top. If he was going to carry anything for me he might as well carry the lot.

He led the way upstairs, and we came to a landing which had an enormous steel door on each side. We trailed up to a second landing similar to the one below. The third was obviously the top. There was a large table pushed against the banister. The Fussy Man's shouting produced a tall Herculean man from the landing below, and a rapid conversation ensued between them. The Fussy Man returned my belongings, bowed, and disappeared down the stairs.

While he extracted a key from his bunch I noticed the Herculean Man's well-cut features. He unlocked one of the enormous steel doors, and with a charming, rather apologetic smile motioned us through. We looked down a dark, narrow corridor; the walls either side were a dirty white, broken by closely set thick wooden doors studded with nails and secured by large iron bolts. . . . *Cells*. . . .

He shot back one of the bolts, and as it fell against the studded doorway it made a sharp metallic thud. I hardly noticed the sound at the time any more than a man enduring Chinese torture of perpetual drips of water on his forehead might notice the first drop, but it was a sound which ultimately bit deep into our consciousness and subconsciousness, for we were to hear it maddeningly and incessantly day in and day out, from six o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night. It penetrated from the far corridor through the enormous steel doors which divided the landing; it penetrated from the floor below each time a cell door was opened or shut. In time it became mingled with all the other prison noises with which we grew familiar.

The Herculean Man pushed open the door and waved me in. Darby made to follow me, but he came between us and indicated that I should go in alone. I asked him if he spoke

English or French, but he shook his head. I tried to explain by gestures that the Kommandant and the Fussy Man had said we could be together. Although he watched my gestures carefully, no gleam of comprehension reached his face. I continued gesticulating, but he firmly but gently put his hand on my shoulder, pushed me through the door, and shot the bolt home. A similar sound close by made me realize that Darby had been put next door. A quick look around told me all I wanted to know: it was better than Laon, but only just. There was a window high up in the whitewashed wall—so high that it would be quite impossible to look out even standing on the bed. It apparently opened and shut by a wire-and-steel contraption fixed in the wall. There were thick bars outside.... The size of the cell was about nine feet by five; a bed with a wooden shelf and an iron pail beside it was all the furniture except for a small, hard broom and a cracked looking-glass in a bamboo frame dangling by a piece of string from a nail in the wall. This was such a friendly-looking object that I found myself gazing at it for some time. I noticed the iron pail had a lid, which curiosity made me take off. The smell which arose made its use abundantly clear.

I threw myself on the bed. It was so hard that I got up to examine the cause. A dirty, unimaginably coarse army blanket was thrown over a straw mattress which lay on three wooden planks supported by two iron trestles. I tried to push out a few of the iron-hard bumps in the mattress, but even stamping on it made no impression. I sat gingerly on a corner of the bed and banged on the wall.

"Darby, can you hear me? Are you all right?"

Her reply came faintly through the wall. "Yes, I'm all right."

"Isn't this hell!"

As I got no further reply, I lapsed into silence. I had forty cigarettes left and a box of matches. I lit one and walked up and down, but soon got tired of doing this in so small a space. I sat on the bed and gazed at the wall. We had survived Laon, so presumably we should survive this. But they couldn't leave us here for many days—they *couldn't.*

I got tired of gazing at the wall and started to arrange my things. As the bed boasted no pillow, I rolled up my greatcoat and put it at the top of the bed. I arranged my eiderdown and blanket and threw my washing-bag on the shelf. *Voilà!* I was installed. I had the toothpaste, Darby the books. It would happen that way. While I would much rather read, Darby, I knew, would prefer to have the proper facilities for cleaning her teeth.

I sat on the bed once more, but gazing at the wall became so monotonous that by negotiation I wriggled myself into the bumps and lay down, resigning myself till dinnertime. By now it was well on in the afternoon and we had clearly missed lunch.

Footsteps. The bolt was clanged down and the door opened. The Herculean Man was standing outside accompanied by a man in an extremely well-cut uniform with rows of medals across his breast. Quantities of silver were on his peaked cap. The illusion he gave of a cinema attendant was enhanced by his speech: "You may buy chocolates, cigarettes, and jam." I could almost see him selling them on a tray. I managed to hide a smile. He looked at me rather severely and continued. "You may have exercise here each day. I do not know how long you will remain here." My door was pushed to.

After what seemed an interminable time the Herculean

Man reappeared. He stood in the doorway and said, "*Essen.*"

"What is *Essen?*"

"*Essen ist Essen.*"

As I could make no sense of this, I continued to lie on the bed.

"*ESSEN!*" yelled the Herculean Man.

Since something was obviously expected of me, I got off the bed and walked to the door. The two steel doors on the landing were open, so I could see down the whole length of the corridor. Most of the cell doors were standing open, and in the half-light I could see the shadowy forms of women coming out.

So there were other women here besides Darby and myself. I wondered who they were, and how long they'd been here. They clustered silently round a large pail which was standing in the center of the landing. Each one was holding a tin in her hand. A man in a dirty blue overall was ladling soup out of the pail. When their tins were filled the women filed silently back to their cells.

This sight made Darby and me almost speechless, but I managed to get out, "So much for our slap-up lunch!"

The Fussy Man put his fingers to his lips. I had not noticed him on the landing. "Speech is absolutely forbidden here," he said. "You must speak to no one, not even your friend."

"But this is fantastic! Why should we be treated like this? We've done nothing wrong, and we belong to the Red Cross."

He went all vague and mysterious. "Perhaps to-morrow I shall have orders that you may talk to each other, but until then neither of you must talk."

"Why haven't we been put together? The Kommandant *said* we might be."

"You must remain where you are."

"But *why?*"

He shrugged his shoulders.

A soldier who had been leaning against the table disappeared down the corridor and returned with four tins and two spoons. He handed them to us, explaining in French that one tin was for water and the other for soup.

The man in the blue overall, I found out afterwards, was the cook. He ladled out some colourless liquid which looked an apology for any kind of soup. It then dawned on me that "*Essen*" must mean soup or food. The letters CHERCHE-MIDI painted white on the soup bucket gave the official name of the place. I was to know later that it is one of the most notorious prisons in France. It struck me as incongruous that Cherche-Midi ("Find the south") should be the romantic name of such hell. I have never found the origin of the name, but I have often pictured the yearnings for the south of some poor devil left there in a past century.

We were marched back and bolted in our respective cells. The soup was as tasteless as it looked, but the coating of grease which was left in the tin told me that it had a certain amount of nourishment. I didn't realize it as yet, but the fetching of *Essen,* our "promenade," and the few minutes we had for washing in the morning were to become the only high spots of the day.

"*Promenade!*" yelled the Herculean Man to me. He had again opened my cell door and was now marshaling the women into line on the landing. Darby was out of her cell, so together we walked toward them. I was put at the head of the line and she at the tail, presumably to give it a military touch.

We were all counted, and the Herculean Man signed to me that I was to lead the way downstairs. This was perfectly easy until I came to the enormous steel door on the ground floor, leading to the inner courtyard. This blocked further progress. The silent *cortège* behind me was halted until the Herculean Man produced some keys. We were led through the large inner courtyard, another door was unbolted, and I was waved through to a similar yard on the right. There were two benches against the wall at right-angles to each other. I made for one of these, sat down, and breathed in the sunshine and fresh air. It was interesting to get a better view of the *cortège* as it silently filed past.

With the exception of an elderly woman of about sixty, whose teeth were as yellow as her hair, a friendly-looking soul whom I at once named Grand'mère, and two others, the *cortège* was composed of women who, despite their laddered silk stockings and crumpled clothes, were obviously well-educated. All were walking around in a circle with an air of utter hopelessness, except a brisk-looking woman and a beautiful but rather sly-looking girl.

The yard, the women, with the soldiers guarding them, the walls, and the steel doors, the countless barred windows—this, I thought, is exactly like a film, except that women would not be guarded by soldiers. As the scene had no reality for me, I watched it objectively. Surely reality is only that to which one becomes accustomed. . . .

A young soldier noticed that I was sitting down and signed to me to get up and walk around with the others. As I preferred to be where I was, I looked blank and pretended not to have understood him. It was a rather pretty, fair, fluffy woman who said to me in French, "I'm afraid you're not

allowed to sit, you'll have to walk." I joined the *cortège*, and with them walked around and around.

Twenty minutes passed; the Herculean Man came and joined the soldier by the door. The Fluffy Woman every time she passed tried to attract his attention. As she dismally failed, she presumably plucked up more courage and cringingly approached him. The supplications of this fawning woman made me feel sick. However long had they been there? Whatever had the place done to them? I found myself wondering about them, and there and then formed a resolution that whatever happened to me I must try at all costs to retain some form of dignity.

I overheard the Fluffy Woman interpreting for some one. As I wanted some interpreting done for myself, I walked over and joined the group.

"Will you please ask when and where I can buy some chocolates and cigarettes?"

She obviously asked permission to speak to me. The Herculean Man nodded. She explained that what we were allowed to buy was brought around to us in the evening.

"That's a blessing," I said. "I'm glad we don't have to buy them now because I've left my money in my cell."

A tall woman said, "You should keep your money on you. You should never leave it in your cell. Don't you realize it might be stolen?"

As usual I'd never thought.... Actually I had put all my money in my coat pocket.

The tall woman said to the Fluffy One, "Please ask if I can buy anything for my husband, as I don't think he has any money on him."

This was my first indication that there were men prisoners here too.

The Herculean Man said he would see that whatever she bought for her husband he would receive in the evening. Then, unlocking the yard door, he indicated to me that I was to lead the way back.

We were bolted in our cells; the "promenade" was over.

I had been gazing at the ceiling for some time when the Herculean Man again appeared. He started rattling off long sentences in German. At last, apparently realizing that speech was hopeless, he went, leaving the door open. I had no inclination to explore the corridor; escape was obviously out of the question. In a matter of minutes he returned with the Fluffy Woman, who told me I had to collect my things and follow him. I did not even bother to ask why.

I was led down the corridor, through the now unlocked enormous steel doors on the landing to a cell in the far corner which I was told would be my new quarters. There was an added attraction in the form of a large box which could serve as a cupboard; otherwise the cell was identical with the one I had left, except that it had no mirror.

I turned to the Fluffy One: "Will you ask this lieutenant if I can fetch the mirror from my other cell?"

"The lieutenant says that it is not possible."

I foresaw myself losing this homely friend. Its possible loss became a tragedy out of all proportion to the situation. It had at some time probably been part and parcel of somebody's home and gave me a feeling of contact with the outside world.

"Will you tell the lieutenant I should love to have it?"

As she translated this the Herculean Man shook his head.

I was still standing hesitatingly by the door . . . he probably thinks it's just out of conceit that I want the damn' thing. . . . But it was not so, for he looked quite concerned. The Fluffy One said, "The lieutenant is sorry that you can not have the mirror. If he could let you have it he would, but it is against his orders to move anything from one cell to another." He seemed genuinely sorry.

Since there was nothing more to be said, I walked into the cell. It took me no longer to install myself than on the first occasion. I suddenly noticed a glass peephole in the door about the size of a man's pocket handkerchief. By looking through it I could see a few yards down either side of the corridor. This occupation entirely absorbed me until I noticed a door opposite which had two letters painted on it. I could not make out the first one, but the other was obviously C. This, then, was the door of a W.C. If they had them here why did we have to use the buckets? The problem became interesting, but after some time my thoughts turned to the more immediate mystery of my removal. It was the glass peephole which gave me the clue: evidently for the future I was to be watched. Why had I suddenly become the bad girl of this party? What could I have done in the short time I'd been here? My thoughts rambled on: I suppose by now they've had time to read my diary. Well, on the whole, *tant mieux!* They would realize that we were ambulance drivers and nothing more dangerous, but if that were so, why put me where I could be perpetually watched? Then it dawned me. . . . *God!* They know I planned to escape. . . . They think I shall try again—that's why they put me so far from Darby. Of course they know everything! A sudden pain in the pit of my stomach became so violent that it forced

me to sit on the bed. If I wanted to incriminate Henri and the bakers I could not have done better—they've got it in black and white.... What had I written? How much can they read? Exactly what have I put? ...

I've never had such a pain in my life; it was so violent that it crowded out all thoughts. It was like two iron bands trying to pull my entrails apart, and the agony went up through my body right into the brain. It was so painful that tears rushed down my cheeks.... It's no use making a bloody fool of yourself, you've got to think—you've probably implicated Darby as well. This is awful—it's the end; but something has got to be done.... This is an occasion when one wants an ice-clear brain... what is an ice-clear brain anyway? Obviously something I haven't got.... I must be mad, mad, mad... I really *must* be mad. Jokingly people have often said so; they're right... joke over.

What will happen to Darby, Henri, and the bakers? Will they be questioned? I must warn them. I must get hold of Darby... she's the other side of two enormous steel doors—she's locked in her cell, and I can't get out of this one.... The women's faces didn't look too dirty, so they must be let out to wash. Wherever we wash I'll meet her—but that, I suppose, won't be till the morning. Will they question her before? Well, if they do it's just too, too bad for Darby. God! I wouldn't have done this for worlds.... The most that can be said is you meant well.... People who mean well are born every minute... they ought to be exterminated at birth—they should never be allowed to live. What's going to happen to Henri? Will he be shot? He *couldn't* be shot—such things don't happen. But it may happen... poor Henri. He may be shot or get several years' imprisonment; so this

is the thanks he'll get for all the trouble he took. If Darby is questioned this evening will she have the sense *not* to deny that we thought of escaping from Soissons? Does she realize that I wrote it all down in the diary? Obviously not—or she hasn't thought about it, for at least she'd have had the sense to tell me to tear the damn' thing up.... For that matter, she never tore up her postcard, but that's not important.... The opportunities I've had of tearing it up! I should never have written it... I must be mad, mad, mad. Would any sane person as a prisoner of war keep a diary and not realize its implications? If, out of interest, one of those men in *The Escaping Club* wrote down the other's plan of escape, then blissfully handed it over to the Germans, what would the other man do to him? ... Quite a lot.

Surely the Germans won't imprison Henri for merely discussing it with me—after all, we did not make any actual attempt. But surely he'll be questioned.... Of course he'll deny that we had any intention of escaping. Darby's sure to deny it too—all our stories will be utterly different. I shall be questioned, I suppose, for hours and hours. What exactly had I written? "Henri tells me no tire." Did I add *for car?* "Henri tells me no tire." Did I add *for car?* Did I or didn't I? If I *did* they will know that he's got one (how he will bless me!). I'm sure I didn't add *for car.* "Gave Henri money for tire." I'm sure to be asked why I gave Henri money and why he wanted a tire.... That's easy enough: I gave Henri money to buy things in the town—I wanted him to get me a new tire because the one on the bicycle was worn out. Of course, Henri when he's questioned will swear I never gave him any money, and he'll never admit to having bought a

tire. He'll never *think* of saying he bought a tire for my bicycle—or will he? Shouldn't think so.

Of course to think clearly one really needs space—why, I wouldn't know. If one's got anything to think with one ought to be able to think with it anywhere. The trouble with my brain is it doesn't think at all, or I should have torn up my diary. I've had plenty of opportunities, instead I *continued* it at Laon. Mad, mad, *mad*. I could still have it with me and tear it up now had I slipped it into my greatcoat pocket—they hardly looked at the pockets in my greatcoat, and they never noticed that it had an inner pocket at all. I'm sure they would never have seen my diary had I put it there. I could have slipped it in when the men went out of the room. Oh, fool! fool! fool! What a peculiar brain I must have—obviously blank with a crack in it somewhere which occasionally lets things percolate through.

If Henri is suddenly questioned about me he'll know something's up. If he's suddenly asked why he bought a tire what reason will *he* give? He'll probably flatly deny that he bought one. Will the Germans believe him or my diary? . . .

"Henri says most Germans here are Austrians; some like the régime, most are forced."

That's not going to do him much good. Of course, I can tell them that I wrote the diary in a very abbreviated form, and that what he really meant was they are "forced" to do so by the similarity of their language and being so geographically near. . . . Will they believe me? Shouldn't think so. I'm afraid Henri won't be too popular.

"Henri says the Germans behave like pigs." I'm sure I wrote that somewhere—wasn't it when we went to the garage to see about petrol?

Some one was patting my shoulder; it was the Herculean Man, and I wondered how long he had been in the cell, as I had not noticed him come in. Although I couldn't understand the words he said, I knew they meant "Don't cry." He probably thought I was making this fuss because I hadn't got the mirror. But I did not care what he thought, or what he did not think. He patted me on the shoulder again in a most comforting manner. Like so many men in the same situation, he looked very embarrassed, and rather shamefacedly offered me a cigarette, which he lit for me. He again said, "Don't cry," and left.

Did I add *for car* or not? . . . At this very moment is Darby being questioned?

Hours slipped by; a soldier came in with a tray selling jam, chocolates, cigarettes, and matches. Although not hungry, my now firmly fixed acquisitive habits were uppermost. For fifteen francs I bought a fair-sized pot of jam. He would let me buy only one packet of cigarettes and no matches; he merely shook his head, and it was the Herculean Man, who happened to be passing, who told him that I could buy matches as well. Another soldier gave me a quarter of a loaf of French bread and a small packet wrapped in greaseproof paper containing a tiny piece of sausage. I put them in the cupboard.

Did I add *for car* or not? . . . I think I'm going mad. I should think people go mad here quite easily—shouldn't be surprised if this place isn't full of lunatics. To be dead one has to die, then to be mad one has to go mad. Once definitely mad I shall be quite all right; it ought to be painless. I'd better get into bed before it's pitch dark; shan't bother to take anything off. This bed is just as bad as the last. It's an insult to beds to call it one.

I simply must try to sleep; we've been up since five. . . .

Shouldn't think any one could sleep in a bed like this—shouldn't think any one has ever slept on one like this.... There's going to be a hell of a muddle when we're all questioned. As I wrote down so much of what the Germans said, I wonder if they'll think I'm a spy... utterly fantastic! As they've the most suspicious natures in the world, I shouldn't be surprised if they do.... Well, well, well! God! I'm tired....

It was the bolt being shot back, now becoming a familiar sound, and a soldier crying "*Waschen*," which woke me. He left the door open.

"*Waschen*," I thought drowsily, must mean wash. *Darby!* I leapt off the bed, and looked for her down the corridor.

6

Cherche-Midi: Solitary Confinement

THE WASHROOM was small; it had a sink with one tap, a table with a gas ring, and a large, heavily barred window. A few women were clustered around the gas ring heating some water in their soup tins; it would be extremely difficult to get the grease off them with cold water only. The other women were queueing up at the sink to wash: Darby was nowhere to be seen. I flicked a little water over my face and returned to my cell for my bucket. I had noticed several women going into the lavatory to empty theirs; Darby might be there.

The lavatory was the most curious contraption I had ever seen; it was about the same size as the washroom. A corner was tiled, and in the center of this area was a large hole, on each side of which was a stand made in the shape of a large man's foot raised several inches from the tiles. When the lavatory chain was pulled it flushed all over the tiles and one could remain on the stands with a complete sea of water all around. Darby was not there. Before we were locked in our cells Grand'mère told me the time was six o'clock.

Hours dragged by; now it must be eight or nine; I lay on the bed wondering why I had not been brought any breakfast; didn't they serve it, or had I been forgotten? More hours dragged by; then I heard the heavy tramp of soldiers down the corridor; I got off my bed and looked through the glass

peephole. I found looking at the soldiers was something to do, but unfortunately they only passed occasionally. I smoked innumerable cigarettes; time stood still; it seemed to remain stationary. I began to lose all count, but I realized that, as it was not dark, a day could not yet have passed; but how many hours? I was glad Henri had my watch; I thought the day would seem even longer if I could see the minutes accumulating.

I became thirsty; the previous owner of my water tin must have used it for *Essen*, because the water tasted of tin and grease. Unpleasant as it was, it helped to quench my thirst.

The bolt was shot back. "*Essen!*" yelled the Herculean man.

The soup bucket was not on the landing to-day but on our side of the enormous steel door, which was, as usual, bolted. We filed out to the bucket, but there was still no sign of Darby; I presumed she was on the other side of the landing, which had already been or was to be fed.

One of the soldiers told me the time was three o'clock.

It became impossible to tell if minutes or hours were passing, hopeless to try to count. I remembered the cinema apparition of yesterday had told me we were to have a *promenade* every day, but surely it was now too late—it must be; it simply must be six or seven.

Again the bolt was shot back, and I was given half a loaf of French bread and a small portion of cheese. As I was still not hungry, I put the bread in the cupboard; the bread from last night had become quite hard and stale. I kicked off my shoes, wrapped myself in the eiderdown; I wondered if this was better than Laon, but my thoughts soon became blank, and I dozed off to sleep.

"*Waschen!*" yelled the Herculean Man.

The same procedure as yesterday; still no sign of Darby. I took a pencil from my coat-pocket and marked two noughts on the wall; I did not want to lose all count of time. From the various markings cut into the door and scratched on the wall I gathered that no recent inhabitant had stayed in that cell for more than twenty-one days. From the hearts pierced by arrows with such names as Ninette and Charlotte I knew that my predecessors must have been French, and twenty-one days the limit of their sentence. *Prison militaire*—they must have been soldiers sentenced by their own officers. This was now a German prison and I a political prisoner, so twenty-one days need not necessarily be the limit of my sentence. For what it was worth, I also worked out that we were called to wash at 6 A.M. and got our first meal between 2 and 3 P.M. Bread and a tiny portion of cheese, sausage, or butter was "served" between 6 and 7 P.M. (Sometimes at 5 P.M. we got weak coffee.)

Forty-eight hours of lying on this apology for a bed was already beginning to make my body ache. Darby could not know where I was should we ever have a *promenade* again. I idly glanced around and saw my Château de Blois badge on my coat, which reminded me that we had not told the Kommandant that we were drivers for an American unit, and that Huffer, our commandant, was an American, so when the Herculean Man unbolted my cell for *Essen* I made him understand that I wanted to talk with him. He returned with the Fluffy One; I told her the particulars of the Château de Blois unit, and pointed out the American flag and the Red Cross on the badge. The Herculean Man promised to tell the Komman-

dant. Within a few moments he returned with three officers; one of them, a tall, dark man who spoke English fluently, asked me, "Why are you here?"

"I have no idea—perhaps you can tell me?"

"The prisoners," he replied, "are not my department. What have you been doing?"

"I was taken prisoner at Nogent-sur-Seine while driving an ambulance for an American unit." I pointed to the Herculean Man. "I have just been giving him particulars."

"So I have heard."

"You have no right to keep me here; I am an ambulance driver attached to the Red Cross."

"We do not take a great deal of notice of the Red Cross. French niggers driving a Red Cross ambulance have shot and killed our soldiers." I told him I had already heard that story and did not believe it. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Paris is now a German city."

"Paris is now a German city," I repeated to myself, and fully realized the bitter truth.

"I might just as well be in Berlin or Hamburg?"

"You are entirely under our ruling here," he replied.

"Well, I haven't shot any of your soldiers, and as I am attached to the Red Cross I ought to be sent to a neutral country."

"You mean a country which is not occupied?"

"I mean a neutral country."

"They do not exist any more."

"Have you swallowed up Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal?"

"The war will soon be over, then you will see for yourself."

"In the meantime do I have to remain here?"

"I'm afraid I can tell you nothing, but I will look at your papers."

"I simply can't understand what my papers are."

He shrugged his shoulders once more. "I will see the Kommandant is given your message," he said, and left with the two other officers, who had not opened their mouths. The Herculean Man bolted me in once more. Paris was now a German city; nothing could be more true.

"*Waschen!*" yelled the Herculean Man. Sleepily I went along to the washroom. I loathed the business of being called at six and washing with cold water; it thoroughly woke me up. Darby was not there. I saw a large saucepan by the gas ring; it seemed nobody's particular property. I filled it with water and carried it back to my cell; this suited me much better, as I could now wash any time of the day I pleased. Apparently there was only one washroom for the lot of us. The people the other side of the landing were let out when we had finished, or *vice versa.* That was why I did not see Darby.

I marked the third nought on the wall. Hours and hours later a woman who spoke French with a strong Italian accent started her daily cry: "*La soupe, soldat, la soupe!*" she yelled. I rather enjoyed hearing her. It made one realize that other people were passing away their time here too.

Shortly after our *Essen* the Herculean Man returned and said, "*Promenade.*" I could hardly believe my ears, but my door was left open, so were the enormous steel ones. The Herculean Man with several other soldiers began marshaling us into line on the landing. Darby was there!

I was again put at the head of the silent *cortège* and Darby at the tail. I was told to lead the way down; the various doors

were unlocked. We were in the small courtyard once more, but this time I made no attempt to sit down—it was a joy to stretch one's legs. It was a hot, sunny day, and I felt quite jealous of a bird perched on top of the wall, chirruping lustily away.

I glanced at Darby. She looked rather wan, but she smiled when she caught my eye, cut out of the circle, and walked behind me. The Herculean Man led her by the arm four paces behind me. He then spoke in German. The Beautiful Sly One interpreted. She told us that we could talk, but that the English were not to speak together. They could, however, talk to the others. It all seemed very mysterious.

The Herculean Man departed, and we were left in the charge of a young boy who could not possibly have been a day older than seventeen. I walked beside Grand'mère and her two *copaines*. I realized the young boy probably would not know that English was being spoken in the babel of languages around him; I got as near Darby as I dared, broke off from French, and said loudly, "Darby, they've got my diary. Do not deny that we tried to escape; pretend we never meant to seriously—just discussed it to while away the time."

Darby heard what I said; she nodded and made a slight grimace, but that was all. She can take most things.

I continued to walk with Grand'mère and her two friends, who told me they had been arrested ten days previously, when they returned to Paris. They had brought little food with them; the shops in the neighborhood were closed. A crowd collected and stormed a grocer's. Soldiers arrived and arrested as many as they could. Grand'mère and her two friends being unlucky. They were very pleasant; I gathered Grand'mère had been a *concierge* and the others had worked in a laundry. They

said there were between two and three hundred soldiers under arrest; the ones with serious sentences were sent to Germany, the others remained in Cherche-Midi; the ones with the lighter sentences were our guards, cooks, etc. Only very rarely were the German soldiers kept in solitary confinement.

I spoke for a while with the Italian woman who had cried for "*la soupe*." She told me she had fled from Italy because of her anti-Fascist views. In fact, she had *fout' le camp* rapidly to Paris, where she was arrested by the Germans immediately they entered. Apparently they had a list of people earmarked for arrest. She had tried to get out of Paris at the last moment, but was arrested at the gates. She was to be sent back to Italy, and expected several years' sentence. She asked if I had been bitten by bugs; I had noticed one or two white blobs on my chest, but told her they did not worry me. Once more the *promenade* was over. It had lasted just under half an hour.

The Fluffy One had been sent to a prison in Austria, and a Czech woman to Germany, I heard.

Six noughts on my wall. A few changes had occurred. The Herculean Man had apparently finished his sentence, for he had gone, and his place was taken by a man so similar that he might have been his brother. Grand'mère told me his name was Baron von X. When he unlocked my door for *promenade* he surprised me by picking up my coat from the bed and helping me into it. His English and his manners were good.

Our *promenade* was now taken in the big central courtyard. We had never been allowed to talk since that day. A soldier stood at each wall to watch us as we filed by; we were supposed to keep single file, but nevertheless it was amazing how many sentences we managed to squeeze in. The trick was never to look at the person you wish to talk to; I found

muttering a few words out of the corner of my mouth and looking straight ahead did wonders. I often spoke to a little Frenchwoman whom I called the Mouse; her manner was quiet, and her voice just a whisper. She managed to tell me in the few moments we snatched that on arriving one day at her Paris flat shortly after the Germans had entered the city she found some of her belongings missing. The *concierge* told her some Germans had been there, so she made inquiries and was told to go to the German H.Q. at the Hôtel de Crillon. They sent her here, there, and everywhere; at last she was sent to some inquiry bureau, where, after waiting several hours, she remarked to another Frenchwoman also waiting to make inquiries, "*Ah! les sales Boches.*" A German soldier arrested her on the spot and brought her to Cherche-Midi. After seven days she was taken over to the Kommandantur and "tried"; she was sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Germany, and was to be sent there as soon as possible. She was not allowed to communicate with any one; her sole possessions were the clothes she was arrested in and her handbag, in which she had 250 francs. Poor little Mouse: I spoke to her nearly every morning; her cell was next to mine. If the little Mouse had been sentenced to two years for saying *sales Boches*, it didn't look too healthy for Henri if it could be proved he called them swine.

On the seventh night, indicated by the seven noughts on my wall, I heard David for the first time. He presumably was German, and his cell faced mine. I did not know what was the matter with him; I only knew he was a very unhappy man. I called him David because he reminded me of the Psalms—not that he chanted them, but his chanting was equally mournful. I could not understand the words, as they were spoken in

German, but as clear as a bell they rose and fell in the utter stillness of the night. Occasionally his voice rose to a high note which broke into a sob Caruso might have envied. Though it was unlikely that he had been in Cherche-Midi for more than a month, the place seemed to have got him down. On, on, he chanted....

To begin with I rather enjoyed listening, his voice was so musical, but there was too much pathos in his dirge to make it endurable for long. On, on, he chanted.... Shut up, David, shut up! We have had more than enough. But David did not shut up; he continued his lamentations far into the night. How long can human beings bear solitary confinement without going mad—just how long?

Time! Time! Time! Most people have a few minutes in the day which drag, perhaps a few hours, but—Time! Time! Time! Is it eternity which passes between six in the morning and *Essen*, or just nine hours? Nothing to do, and all day and night in which to do it. Time, why do you have to exist at all? After *Essen* to seven in the evening, when we have our bread, is less than half the morning, but from seven till dusk seems eternity once more. Time! Time! Time! How can one endure you? I'm tired of looking at these walls, I'm tired of lying on this bed; I have only two more cigarettes and the rest of the afternoon and evening to go through. How can one exist here without even cigarettes? Time, I should like to annihilate you! I hate you beyond words, and yet you are eternity. We cut you up into parts of a day, we think of you as a space between meals, we add the days into weeks, count the weeks into months, the months into years, the years we call our lifetime; and thus we try to conceive of you. You must have the laugh of us all, for you are endless—endless and endless. No-

body hates you more than I—you are horrible. Is it you who are passing or I? Do you exist—or do I? I really enjoy that sordid little *promenade*, for I can almost forget that you exist; I should enjoy anything which made me forget you—you are the most unbearable thing I have encountered . . . yet there are moments of you that I have thoroughly enjoyed. But you are not a good companion by yourself: I have never met a worse.

So what, O Time, so what? It seems as though we shall have a great deal of each other *à deux*. I am not looking forward to it; you are an impersonal thing which was and is and will be, and nobody has ever hated you as much as I. Those seven noughts represent all that I know of your existence. . . . What happens when you bore one beyond tears—what is your next trick? You can make one indifferent to anything; I hardly care now what happens to Darby, Henri, and the bakers. I think I shall be sorry if I have incriminated them in any way, but I have thought very little about them lately; in fact, I am almost beyond thought. No doubt you have already planned your designs; you can take care of them, *mon bon ami*, you are the most merciless creature. You are making me quite indifferent to myself and others. Such is your power, O Time; that is why I loathe you. You are worse than the devil; you are the most demoralizing thing I have ever met, yet you exist around me, you are my entire environment. . . . You make tragedies, yet I suppose you make life. . . .

I found myself surveying the situation: how long shall I have to stay here; how long, O Lord, how long? The answer, I thought, is possibly written somewhere in the sands, but I do not know it, nor am I likely to. I presume sooner or later we shall have some sort of a trial, and sentence which will probably be for the duration of the war. How long will the

war last? Two, three, more years maybe. Two or three years is out of the question so far as I'm concerned; I can stand this for only two or three months. There is a possibility that the British Red Cross, the American Red Cross, or the International Red Cross may try to get us out. I imagine my people at home are doing all they can, but the point is that whatever the Red Cross can or can not do for us, they do not even know—and are not likely to find out—where we are. There can not be a soul in the whole world, except the Germans, who knows that.

Another question absorbs my thoughts. I know and have known since I have been in this hell, had I cared to think about it, that whatever the German intentions may be for me, I have my own. In some ways I am fortunate, for I have not the same fear and horror of leaving my life upon this earth as have some other people I have met. It does not worry me at all if my body decomposes and there is no sphere beyond the clouds where I may be rewarded for such virtues as I may have had and punished for the lack of them.

But should we mortals be immortal I can only face the Great Beyond with philosophic interest; my common sense assures me that I am akin to the majority of people—neither very good, nor very bad; I can believe only that the Guiding Power is wise beyond our mortal conception. Wisdom in the full meaning of the word must incorporate justice. I have no fear of being cast into an everlasting hell, because I can not credit that such a place exists....

I imagine the Great Beyond as some kind of resting-place to which we are sent, and where we stay for a while and are then told to go on with the job of improving our egos. Our egos are far from perfect, and I believe in evolution. Mean-

while, however valuable one's experience on this earth may be, I personally will only have it under certain conditions. I have no wish to live for the sake of being driven mad or permanently cowed, and life in this prison could do one or the other or even both to me, if I were kept here indefinitely. To remain three months seemed possible, but beyond that all hopes of freedom would have gone. If the Red Cross could do anything for us, surely they could do it in that time; similarly, if the Germans intended releasing us they would have made up their minds by then. Under the Nazi, Fascist, and Communist régimes I have heard of people being left in cells for years without a trial—now I can believe it. Some people enjoy their suffering; they think it makes them purged and beautiful. Mine makes me bored and bad-tempered. Well... how long, O Lord, how long?

I saw a means of escape. I could throw a shoe up at the window, and with the broken glass cut an artery of my wrist—quite painless and nothing very horrible in that, but would the glass fall inward or outward? If it fell outward I should be no better off—in fact, far worse; what extra punishment would the Germans give for breaking a window? What could be worse than this? If the glass fell inward I should have to be quick in case the guard came to see what the noise was about. In the few seconds I might have, would I or would I not carry out my intentions? Can one really know what one will do until the actual moment comes?

While gazing at the window and wondering which way the glass would fall I caught sight of an electric bulb, high up, hanging from the ceiling. This seemed providence, as none of the other cells had electric lights at all. Now I remembered Baron von X wondering what the switch was outside my door,

and switching it on and off out of curiosity. I placed the cupboard on the bed, and with a little ingenious balancing managed to detach the bulb. The rest was simple; it was broken easily into sharp fragments, and with the paper from my cigarette packets I carefully wrapped them up. It made such a small parcel that it was not noticeable in the pocket of my skirt.

I realized the possibility of our being freed or the war ending in four, five, maybe six or seven months, but one could go on thinking like that and remain imprisoned for years. I firmly fixed the date in my mind—in exactly three months. Such were my intentions. Whether or not I should have carried them out when the time came is, of course, impossible to say. I know only that I am glad I made that decision, because afterwards I came to the conclusion it was that and that alone which gave me the mental relaxation I had during the rest of my stay in Cherche-Midi. The Fiend beating up the German soldiers and screaming his head off in my face, the perpetual yellings of the Bully, the endless heavy tramp of the soldiers' feet, the endless banging of the steel doors in the courtyard, the endless metallic thud of the bolts, the perpetual feeling of hunger, the lamentations of David, being bitten alive by bugs, the gnawing of the rats, and the general sordidness, misery, and suffering had little effect on me. I felt I had made up my mind: I would live in these surroundings for three months, and for three months only.

The following morning, after *Waschen*, Baron von X told me to collect my belongings, as I was being moved to another cell. He carried my eiderdown and greatcoat for me; we crossed the landing, and he opened a cell door near the first one I had occupied. He gave me no explanation for this change. However, as all the cells on the south side of the corridor

were similar, I was indifferent to the move. The day dragged on as all the others had.

On the way to the lavatory on the day of the "ninth nought" I saw a sight which made me stand stock still. A woman whom I had not seen before was walking down the corridor, the weight of her bucket seeming to double her up; her face was bright yellow, her lips dead white, and her eyes clear blue. Her eyes fascinated me; tears were running down her cheeks like water, from a tap, yet her eyes were neither reddened nor swollen. She put down her bucket and asked if I knew where she emptied it. She was holding her side, doubled up with pain. I asked what was the matter; she muttered, "*Je suis tellement malade.*" I gathered the trouble was liver. I picked up her bucket, as she seemed quite incapable of carrying it, and showed her the lavatory and washroom. Between groans and sobs she told me that she had evacuated her château near Soissons; it had been shut up, and on her return a few days previously she had found it in a filthy condition, occupied by German soldiers. She complained to one of them, and a few hours later he arrested her; he accused her of spitting in his face. I believed her when she said it was an utter lie. She seemed a delightful woman; spitting was obviously a thing she would never dream of, but I could imagine her becoming voluble when she found her château like a pigsty. She was taken to Paris and tried at the Kommandantur. The soldier who accused her was brought there too. He said she had stood on the left side of him, and yet he accused her of spitting on his right cheek. The president of the court himself saw the blunder, but as the soldier swore on oath there was nothing to be done. (Once a German soldier has sworn on oath it is a very serious offence against him should he be

proved incorrect.) She told me the president of the court shrugged his shoulders and sentenced her to six months' imprisonment. She had been desperately ill for some time, and unless she had medical treatment she doubted if she would ever leave the Cherche-Midi alive. Her name was Suzanne de P., and while she had been hurriedly whispering her story to me the tears continued to flow down her face. I told her she must ask Baron von X to take her to the doctor. I carried her bucket back to her cell; she sat on her bed and rocked herself to and fro. Her cell was opposite mine and faced north into a small courtyard. All the cells facing north were in perpetual gloom, getting practically no light or air.

During *promenade* I saw poor Suzanne de P. sitting on a bench, and in the strong sunlight she looked, if possible, even a brighter yellow; the tears flowed unceasingly, but still her eyes were neither reddened nor swollen. On the return to our cells she could hardly get up the stairs. I asked why she had come down. She said that the soldiers had insisted upon it; she hadn't been able to see the doctor yet, she hoped to see him the next day. Her *fiancé* was attached to one of the embassies, and she hoped through his influence she might get sent to a hospital.

Just before dusk Baron von X gave me four peaches and a cake of Morny soap. He told me that Suzanne de P. had sent them over to me; her *fiancé* had been allowed to send her a hamper. Four peaches and a cake of soap in the Cherche-Midi was luxury; such a handsome reward for carrying a desperately ill woman's bucket for a few yards seemed ironic. But thinking a little about Suzanne de P. helped to break the monotony; eating the four peaches did, too.

Another day began. I woke up conscious of my face; it felt

stiff, but was not painful. I found I could open my eyes only with difficulty; I groped for my flapjack to see what had happened. My reflection in the mirror appalled me—my face was so unlike a face that in the end I was forced to smile. I realized what it was; bugs, bugs, and then bugs. There was no even contour to my chin; white blobs were hanging like bunches of grapes from ear to ear. Another white bunch clustered around the corner of my mouth; one side of my nose was twice the size of the other, and my forehead and eyelids had bunches of blobs all over them. It looked as though I had been plastered with a thousand white slugs whose dead whiteness contrasted oddly with the gray-green of my face.

Baron von X unbolted my cell.

"I simply can not stay in this cell," I said.

"I am afraid you must. There is not another one to put you in."

"But I can't stay here—this cell is alive with bugs."

Baron von X shrugged his shoulders. "I am sorry, but this is a French prison."

"I'm not interested in the nationality of the bugs. You can see for yourself what they have done to me."

"There are bugs in every cell in this prison. I too have been bitten." He pulled up his sleeve and showed me a couple of white blobs, but there was no comparison between these and my condition. At the moment I had only slight discomfort, but, should ever they irritate, instinct told me, "Don't scratch, whatever you do—don't scratch."

Baron von X said there was nothing to be done about the bugs, as they were embedded in the walls, but he would see that my bites were attended to. "You must see the doctor," he said.

When I queued up for *Essen* a sympathetic expression passed over the little cook's face, and he ladled me out an extra large portion.

At *promenade* Darby gave me quite a shock—she had been badly bitten too, but was flaming scarlet. "You idiot," I muttered as I passed her. "Don't scratch them."

"I haven't," she muttered back. "They've just gone that colour."

It was peculiar—her scarlet face and my dead white one. I gathered most of the women had been bitten from time to time, but nothing like Darby and me. I wondered why we had been suddenly so virulently attacked.

During the afternoon I waited for Baron von X to take me to the doctor, but I did not see him again for the rest of the day. He had only a short term of imprisonment for having a night out in Paris which ended in his getting very drunk. The little fair cook, when he brought around the bread in the evening, gave me three cigarettes and two matches of his own accord. He could not speak one word of English or French, but by the tone of his voice I gathered he was sympathizing with me. It was infuriating, not being able to understand a word he said.

I gingerly arranged my eiderdown and buried my face in my overcoat; my knowledge of bugs is slight, but I knew they usually slept in the day and hunted at night. As the dusk deepened into darkness I wondered what the walls would bring forth. I told myself it was no use getting into a flat spin, and fell off to sleep.

I was awakened suddenly by a burning pain across my back and shoulders; drowsily coming out of a heavy sleep, I thought my bed must have caught fire. It wasn't the bed, but myself.

It felt as though a lighted match was being run up and down my back. I felt a plonk on my face as a bug dropped off the ceiling. I hastily flicked it off, and in doing so set up a violent irritation. I found that digging one's nails into the burning flesh momentarily relieved the pain, but it returned almost instantaneously like a ball of flame.

I was so busy concentrating on my face and back that I came to the conclusion I must be imagining things when I felt a burning sensation on my chest. I had seven cigarettes and four matches. I doubted if there was much chance of getting any more until the next evening, so to hunt for my tormentors by the light of a match meant chain-smoking in the morning and no cigarettes for the afternoon. However, I lit one to see what was happening in my bed; by the brief flicker I managed to squash four bugs into my eiderdown, though the others running about were legion. I soaked my towel in the saucepan, and wrapped it around my face and tried to arrange it across my back and shoulders. I found this relieved the pain considerably, but I had nothing to put on my chest, which burned more than ever. I found myself losing all control of myself and started scratching as hard as I knew how.

It was a restless night. I constantly had to dip the towel into the water; David continued his mournful lamentations—his dirge was now getting thoroughly on my nerves. I also heard a most peculiar noise underneath my bed. To begin with I thought it must be a prisoner in the cell below trying to burrow his way out; it sounded as though he would arrive in my cell at any moment. I came to the conclusion that any prisoner trying to do this would never make such a noise; it was scuffle, scuffle, scuffle, gnaw, gnaw, gnaw—the gnawing sound was stupendous. An occasional squeak made me realize

that it must be either rats or mice. What with the noise they made, David, and the bugs, the night seemed interminable.

I tackled Baron von X in the morning. "You promised to take me to the doctor, but you never did."

He apologized for forgetting, and said he would take me during the morning.

Something must have gone wrong with the organization of the Cherche-Midi, for I met Darby in the washroom. Poor Darby, she looked as though she was coming to the end of her tether.

"Myers, I'm slowly but surely going mad."

I could think of nothing to say except, "It's a great life if you don't weaken." Beyond the exchange of these words, we did not speak; there seemed nothing to add.

I filled my saucepan with water, washed my soup tin, emptied my bucket, and swept out my cell within a matter of two minutes. I always meant to wash myself during the day, but as the days passed I found that less and less could I be bothered to do so. I could go for days without washing at all or combing my hair. Cleanliness hardly interested me, my personal appearance not at all. The little powder I had left in my flapjack I was saving up, for what I did not quite know—possibly to create an impression on the president of the court when, if ever, we had a trial.

Later on in the morning Baron von X came to my cell. "Come with me to the doctor," he said.

I followed him across the landing, down the corridor, past a queue of soldiers waiting for the doctor. He knocked on a door, and I was told to go in. The doctor was a short dark man. His first words were, "Why are you here?"

"I have no idea," I replied.

Baron von X was standing stiffly to attention. The doctor nodded his dismissal and asked me why I was smiling.

"As I've never had any privacy since I've been here, it seems strange to have it now."

The doctor spoke quite good French and English; when he was at a loss for a word in one language he switched over to the other. It was some time before we got on to the subject of my health; he wanted to know what I had been doing and why I had come to France. I gave him a brief summary.

"Have you any idea," I inquired, "if I shall be freed? As I am attached to the Red Cross, I ought to be."

He shook his head. "I'm afraid I can tell you nothing. I have not seen your papers, and in any case I am allowed to discuss only generalities and health with the prisoners."

"Now we are getting on to the subject of health, what about these bites?"

He could see my face, but I started to pull off my shirt to show him the rest; he didn't seem interested.

"I can see, I can see," he said.

"Is there anything to be done about it?"

"I'm afraid very little. The best is to give you some soap. Rub it on the bites so that it forms a thick paste and then the air will not get at them, and I hope they will irritate you less. Did you sleep last night?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "What do you think? You are a doctor."

He gave me two little white pills and said, "Take them this evening, and I do not think anything will disturb your sleep."

I thanked him. "It's good of you to try to cure these bites, but I suppose the real answer is to kill the bugs."

"Yes, that is the real answer, but it is impossible to do so here; all the walls are impregnated with them."

"I couldn't agree more," I said somewhat sourly, and asked why I had been in the prison a fortnight and was only bitten once or twice before. He told me it was a question entirely of the condition of one's blood. There were certain types which bugs would never suck, but it seemed now my blood was in the right state for them.

Baron von X led me back to my cell. *Essen*, *promenade*, and the day was over. The same performance as last night. Fortunately during the evening a soldier came round and I was able to buy some chocolate, cigarettes, and matches, so now I had some matches to spare for the hunt—not that it helped much if one squashed four or five bugs by the light of a match. *Plonk*, *plonk* ... only too well did I know how they dropped off the ceiling. I killed a few, only to have more falling off or crawling up the bed; I was never quite sure if it was my old bites irritating or fresh ones occurring. Flames of irritation were now shooting all over me; it became a question of scratching till it grew too painful to do so. Groups of bites I discovered were bad enough on the fleshy parts of one's body, but on the tops of one's toes and fingers, the palms of one's hands, the shinbones of one's legs and the soles of one's feet they were almost unbearable. Those were too painful to attempt to scratch; the only relief I found was to cool off my hands and feet in my saucepan of cold water.

Baron von X had arrived during the afternoon with two soldiers carrying a tub of water. He had given me a large cake of soap and a square of linen which he said the doctor

had sent. The soldiers came back to fetch the tub, but I retained the soap and the piece of linen. I had lathered my bites very thoroughly and found in the daytime it did relieve me a little, but the warmth and the mere touch of an eiderdown started them off again. If I squashed five, six, seven bugs in my eiderdown, what matter? *Plonk, plonk*—off they dropped from the ceiling. As I squashed and killed them I felt like the walrus trying to sweep away the sand. Sometimes curiosity made me want to know whether it might be eight or nine, or eight or nine hundred which were causing me so much misery; but even curiosity would not allow me to waste too many matches. I had a better idea and rolled into spills the paper which I had saved from my chocolate and cigarette packets; then for a few seconds I had a continuous flow of light by which I killed innumerable of my little bedfellows, but it was an unequal struggle. By their very number they won the night, which I spent chiefly in sitting on my bed soaking my hands and feet in water and wringing out towels. The pills which the doctor had given me made me feel extremely drowsy; if Morpheus had been in my cell I doubt if he could have slept.

As the gray light of morning broke I watched the bugs crawling up the wall to return to their niches. At night they were very small, no bigger than an ant, but at dawn they were large and bloated. If they crawled within my reach I picked up my shoe and squashed them with a feeling of hatred; it was my blood, not theirs, which was squelched on the walls.

During the afternoon Baron von X came into my cell.

"*Auf Wiedersehen.* I'm off now, and to-morrow I shall go to London."

I thought he was joking. "How are you going to get to London, and what will you do when you get there?"

"I have finished my sentence to-day, and I rejoin the Air Force. To-morrow I fly, and bomb, bomb, bomb London."

"Well, you can try if you like, but you will probably be shot down—I hope you are, but I hope you don't get killed."

Baron von X seemed to think the probabilities of his being shot down very remote.

"Anyway, if you are, and become a prisoner of war, you will be well treated. If ever I get back to England it would be amusing, would it not, Baron, if I came to visit you in one of our prison camps?"

Baron von X smiled. He did not think that very possible. The war, he assured me, would be over within a month. We shook hands and said, "*Auf Wiedersehen.*"

War is war, but I liked Baron von X and the Bald-headed Man. I first noticed the latter a few days before among the soldiers. He had a clear white skin, startlingly blue eyes, and a perfectly bald head. He seemed to supervise when *Essen* was brought around. When my soup tin was filled he escorted me back to my cell, clicked his heels, bowed, and said, "*Bon appétit.*" When he shot the bolt home it was the first time since I had been there that I did not notice the dull metallic thud.

I woke up a few days later to find him standing in the doorway. He smiled and said, "*Guten Tag.*" I could not imagine what time of the day it was.

"*Guten Tag,*" I replied. "What is it you want?"

He looked surprised. "I've come to call you. It is time for you to wash."

"Oh, I'll be along in a minute." I had to pause for a second to control my feelings, as I was not far from tears; being called with a smile and a good morning brought home very near indeed. Later the Bald-headed Man told me he was imprisoned because he had failed to carry out an order; his sentence was fairly light. He spent most of this time downstairs in the office with the Fussy Man or over at the Kommandantur, so unfortunately I saw little of him. He spoke fairly good English, and went out of his way to do what he could for me. He would give me presents of biscuits or an extra ration of cheese, and, as the man with the tray did not come around very often, I had only to ask him for chocolates or cigarettes, and if he could he would bring them to me.

Occasionally one or two officials had visited my cell, apparently out of curiosity, for they always asked me why I was imprisoned. When I told them I did not know they asked the soldiers who were showing them around. They said, "For espionage." On another occasion they said, "For maiming the wounded."

There was a young doctor with whom I spoke sometimes in our corridor; he had spent a few months at Margate, which he had thoroughly enjoyed. He told me he had met many "smart" people there, and had seemed disappointed in me when I replied that I had never been to Margate. After the fantastic story of my maiming German wounded the next time I saw him I asked if he had any knowledge of this; he told me they were absolutely forbidden to discuss the prisoners' cases with them, and for doing so he might get an extra sentence, but he looked wise and said he knew why I was there.

"Well, do tell me," I almost screamed.

He obviously knew something, for he said, "You have recently been to Soissons, have you not?"

"Yes."

"There were many German soldiers there?"

"There were several hundred—one or two I quite liked—but what's that got to do with it?"

He said nothing.

"Do you mean that I am accused of espionage?"

"Yes."

"It is not true."

"Prisoners always say that they are innocent."

I presumed they must be taking my diary seriously. Well, *tant pis*. Even if they were going to accuse me of espionage on account of my diary I realized that could not be the original reason for bringing us to the Cherche-Midi. Until they searched me they had no knowledge of my diary, so the thought once more returned that we were there either through the snake in the grass at Soissons or through my argument with the disagreeable Prussian in Henri's *bureau*. I discredited the story of maiming their wounded, as it was utterly absurd.

Since it was impossible to know why we were there until we were charged, it was hopeless to think about it any more.

The next morning I met Darby again in the washroom. She looked even worse than before.

"Myers, how long can one stand this?"

"Three months," I said promptly.

Later in the morning, when I was drowsily thinking, I regretted my remark, as I should have hated to feel respon-

sible if I had influenced any one on such a decision one way or another.

Our chief guard now was a man whom Darby and I called the Bully. Darby said she had never met a man who so aptly fitted the word. He certainly did. He was a cross between a lout and a bully, but his bark was worse by far than his bite. He was fat, coarse, had a large, loose mouth and little piggy eyes, and, like all bullies, loved the sound of his own voice. He strutted about and roared all day long; he banged doors and he screamed and shouted, but underneath all that noise there was no real malice. He was not a pleasant person, but he was human. I think most of the soldiers stood in awe of him, but the little fair cook was magnificent. One day when the Bully unbolted my door for *Essen* the soup bucket was put in the corridor just outside my cell, which was nearest the enormous steel door. While the Bully was busy opening the other cells the little cook with a movement as quick as lightning drew from his pocket a packet of cigarettes and a box of matches and threw them across the corridor on to my bed. His movement had been so swift that had not the cigarettes and matches landed on my bed I should not have believed my eyes. "*Danke schön,*" I muttered as I went to the bucket with my soup tin. I lingered till I was the last to have mine filled; the Bully was busy rebolting the cell doors, and I stood by mine and beckoned the little cook. He hurriedly looked up and down the corridor to see what the Bully was up to and then came over to me. I thrust ten francs into his hand. "*Nein, nein,*" he muttered, and refused to take the money.

On other occasions he brought me whatever he could—an extra ration of cheese or butter at night, which was a boon,

for now I knew what it was to be really hungry. Quite regardless of bugs, the gnawing sounds underneath my bed, and David, who still continued his lamentations, there were nights when hunger alone would have prevented my sleeping. By eleven or twelve in the mornings it became acute; it was more than emptiness, it was a definite pain. I used to save my cigarettes in the hope that smoking would alleviate it, but I found that smoking when I was as hungry as that simply made me feel sick and giddy. Nothing helped except soup and bread. If I was too hungry to sleep in the mornings I would spend the time between *Waschen* and *Essen* longing for something to eat. How I pitied the women who were there without money and could not buy the few luxuries the tray man occasionally brought round. When he did not come, the little gifts from the Bald-headed Man and the little cook made an entire difference to the day. The joy one can have from a slab of *chocolat* Menier. . . .

Since my arrival the silent *cortège* had changed considerably. Darby and I were now two of the oldest inhabitants. During *Waschen* when I saw strangers I felt like an old girl at school, and showed them what there was to learn.

Grand'mère and her two *copaines* were still with us; the three of them had now been put in a room together. They had managed to scrounge several empty bottles. Now our coffee-cum-tea was served in the main courtyard and given to us just before we returned to our cells after *promenade*. Grand'mère and Co. brought all their bottles down and had them filled. In the morning they used to heat their extra coffee in their soup tins on the gas stove, and they never failed to give me some. I generally gave them cigarettes if I had any to spare. I quite often stood in their doorway

drinking and the Bully used to see us from the landing, but he never said a word.

The little Mouse too was still with us; if possible she was even more quiet. The Sly One and the Brisk Woman had been put together; they never opened their mouths during *promenade,* and were silent when they washed.

One day when I met Darby on the landing, she said, "I realize we are here for duration."

I shrugged my shoulders. Three months, I thought; not a day longer.

Eighteen noughts had now accumulated on my wall. It annoyed me to think that those little harmless circles represented so much, and so little. I still faintly looked forward to *promenade;* it was my main contact with my fellow-prisoners, and made me realize that a world other than German soldiers still existed.

Suzanne de P. had left us. Grand'mère told me she had been taken away in the middle of the night, I presumed to a hospital; for her sake I was glad, but I missed her. She had taken my name and all particulars, and had assured me that if the chance arose she would get her *fiancé* to do what he could for me. I doubted if he could do anything, but the mere thought of something being done occasionally gave me a feeling of hope.

I had learned from one of my fellow-prisoners that Huffer was in Bordeaux.

From the little I had seen of the new arrivals, Louise, Collette, Schiaparelli, Jeanne, the Polish woman, and the Petite Parisienne, I liked them all, but unfortunately we had recently been cursed by the presence of Carmen Morey. She was a German-Swiss who had lived in Berlin for many years, and

had frequently visited France, where she was arrested in October, 1938, and sentenced to death for espionage. In April, 1940, when the Germans came to France, they freed her and fêted her as a heroine, until they suspected her of double-crossing them. She was now in the Cherche-Midi pending her trial in Berlin. We had to suffer her; in sheer deviltry she was a queen bee.

Louise had been with us a fortnight; she was a delicate, frail-looking woman of over forty. She had arrived in a dark blue satin coat and skirt, with a white blouse; she had a quiet manner, a great sense of humor, and was full of courage and common sense. She spoke four languages perfectly, including English. Her cell was near mine, and we always washed together and talked as much as we dared during *promenade*. The little cook and three other soldiers were now sent to the courtyard to see that we did not speak. I did most of my talking as I passed him; he always shook his head and said, "*Nicht sprechen*," but I never took any notice, as I guessed he would not report me.

The Bully, who was in chief charge of the *promenade*, had made a new rule; if any one was seen talking she was immediately sent back to her cell.

Grand'mère had been allowed to see her son, and she had offered to give him any letters that I wanted mailed. I thought this an opportunity to get in touch with Henri, but when I mentioned this to Louise she said, "Don't be a fool and trust any one here; your letter may be intercepted. Whatever you write, even the mere fact of your writing to Henri may make him a suspect. Don't forget you are one yourself."

I took her advice.

The next day Grand'mère's son and daughter-in-law came

to visit her. She was a kind-hearted soul and had asked several people if they wanted letters posted; she naturally was given quite a few. On leaving the prison her visitors were searched and the letters found on them. No one knew what happened to the son, but the daughter-in-law joined us as a prisoner, and we did not know how long she would remain with us. Grand'mère had over a year added to her sentence. Carmen Morey had overheard Grand'mère asking who wanted letters posted, and had immediately reported this to the Fiend, who had now joined the Bully as one of the guards.

Many of the German soldiers had no time for her; they had warned us that it would be to her advantage to report on us as much as possible.

I saw Carmen Morey for the first time one day at *promenade*. She was sitting on a bench with her ankle bandaged; the French had taken her outside Paris to be shot with her accomplices. Fortunately for her, the Germans had occupied the town that day, and all that happened to her was a wound in her leg from a stray piece of shrapnel from the retreating French. When she told me she was a journalist and had read all the Swiss papers and recently listened to the B.B.C. broadcasts I was more than interested. I had had no news whatever of the outside world since I was captured, and I did not know if England was still fighting or whether she had thrown in her hand when France capitulated. Carmen Morey told me that the opinion of the Swiss Press was that England could not hold out for more than a fortnight, and that the King had fled to Canada. Whether England could or could not carry on the war alone I had no idea, but I was convinced that the King had not gone to Canada. I was more than definite in my mind about that; if England was being badly bombed the

Queen might go with the Princesses, but the King, I felt sure, would stay to the end.

Feeling very depressed, I repeated this conversation to Louise, who said, "My dear, don't believe a word. I heard Churchill speak. England is carrying on, and the R.A.F. is doing wonders. There is no thought of capitulating. Surely you don't imagine that England will lose the war?"

I felt much better after that.

Marie, the Polish woman, had been with us only a few days. She was a tall, handsome, Junoesque type who carried herself magnificently; she always reminded me of a caged lion. She had one of the most beautiful skins I have ever seen, and washed herself from top to toe every morning. She was accused of helping Polish suspects to *fout' le camp* from Paris. Her sentence was twenty years' imprisonment.

There had been a rumor going around for some time that the Germans found the Cherche-Midi uninhabitable for their soldiers, and that we were all to be moved to another prison. Rumor mentioned the name of several prisons, but Fresnes was most frequently spoken of as our abode. If we were to be moved, no one had any idea whether or not we should still be kept in solitary confinement. I asked the Polish woman if she was looking forward to our prospective change.

She said, "I am entirely indifferent. I have no intention of spending twenty years in German prisons. I shall finish my life."

She spoke in a very detached voice.

"You are taking all this very calmly," I said.

She threw back her head and said with unforgettable pride, "I am a Polish woman."

The first day Collette was with us she became rather hysterical, and when Louise and I met her during *Waschen* she was in a bad state. Her arrest had been a surprise and shock to her, but she had calmed down afterwards and had become quite philosophical. In her youth she must have been beautiful, but now she was rather plump. She had pretty curly brown hair and wonderful soft brown eyes. She was typically French—charming and attractive and generosity itself. For reasons which I discovered later she was allowed visitors, who brought her real French coffee, fruit, chocolates, and cigarettes. Whatever Collette had she always shared with her friends.

Schiaparelli had the most sensational first morning of us all. It was caused chiefly by the Fiend, who now at the mere sight of me went into a fit of rage. I never discovered any quality in him which could be called human; he was pure fiend, but to give the devil his due Darby did tell me one day he spoke a few civil words to her. He never did that to me, but then our dislike for each other was entirely mutual. Our first *contretemps* had been over my cigarette ends. Since my arrival I had always put them out on the floor and swept them together with the crumbs of bread and general accumulation of dust into a corner of the cell by the door; in the mornings we swept our little piles of dirt into the corridor, which later on was cleaned up by the soldiers. The first morning the Fiend was in charge of us the sight of the little pile of cigarette ends had a distinct effect on him when he unbolted my cell for *Waschen*. He screamed and bellowed in German; he knew neither French nor English, but from certain words I gathered he was saying cigarette ends, dirt, and swinish English. He seemed unable to control his voice; it poured

from him with a thunderous volume which enveloped the air. It was shattering to listen to—the noise went around my cell, along the corridor, across the courtyard, and could be heard in the streets, I was afterwards told. His protruding eyes looked as though they might pop out of his head at any moment, the nerves in his cheeks twitched, and his loose mouth slobbered all over his face. To stand up to that roar of sound was as exhausting as battling against a tempestuous wind. . . . After some time there was a momentary lull.

The Fiend was now dancing up and down gesticulating wildly with his hands, his face still twitching. He took a step forward and knocked my head against the wall. I had expected something like this to happen, as he was obviously beyond any self-control. This seemed to sober him up; he banged my door to, only to open it again within a second. I gathered I was to brush the cigarette ends out into the corridor.

While I did this he stood beside me and yelled and screamed. The little cook and one or two other soldiers with whom I was on quite friendly terms were leaning against the table on the landing. They seemed quite oblivious of the din; their faces were quite expressionless as they gazed at the floor.

Sleep after this was out of the question; I felt as though I had been engulfed in a raging storm. I spent some time digging out bugs in the plaster of the walls and in a very short while had killed twenty-eight. During *promenade* Louise told me that she had been quite deafened in her cell by the noise of the Fiend. She thought he should be reported for using physical violence. I did not agree, as I thought it would do more harm than good.

The next morning when he had unbolted my cell I had

hoped for a quieter time, but it was not to be, for Schiaparelli had arrived during the night. On my arrival in the washroom the only occupant was the Polish woman; she was stripped naked, sluicing herself with water. Schiaparelli came in, leaving the door open; she was hysterical to the point of collapse. I flicked some cold water over her face, but it did little good. She obviously had little idea where she was or what was happening; she was screaming and quivering all over.

I heard the Fiend's voice coming down the corridor apparently to see what was up. The Polish woman turned to me and said in French, "Shut the door, we don't want that devil in here." To prevent him coming in I had to shut the door in his face. He burst it open, roaring as loudly as yesterday. This had the effect of momentarily frightening Schiaparelli out of her wits. I think she lost all sense of sight. Yelling with terror, she banged into things as she rushed round the room like a mad thing trying to escape. The Polish woman remained naked at the sink entirely ignoring the scene.

The Fiend grabbed hold of Schiaparelli. I tried to wrench her away from him, but I don't think she was conscious of the fact that she was being pulled this way and that. I couldn't compete with his strength, and, still roaring, he dragged the demented woman down the corridor. I followed behind them and on the landing met the Bald-headed Man. "You must do something," I said under cover of the Fiend's barrage. "If she is left by herself . . ." I shrugged my shoulders.

The Bald-headed Man at once took in the situation. He nodded and disappeared. I followed the Fiend across the landing and stood watching him throw Schiaparelli into a cell opposite mine. Before I had time to run into my cell he landed

me a terrific push, and I had the unpleasant experience of having the door slammed within a fraction of my face.

After a few days Schiaparelli became more or less her normal self; the Bald-headed Man had done what he could for her. One could now judge what she was really like. In her youth, like Collette, she must have been beautiful, but now at fifty she was beginning to look rather *passée*. She too was French, with the wit and charm of her race. We called her Schiaparelli because I believed her capable of making a model dress even by tearing up one of our filthy, archaic army blankets.

She had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for tearing down one of the posters the Germans were plastering over Paris. The poster, she told me, depicted a German soldier carrying a French baby; underneath was a statement that German soldiers would care for the children of France. The worst part of her story, I thought, was that she had been informed against by a Frenchman who obviously must have been in the pay of the Germans. He had seen her tearing down the poster and reported her to the *préfet*, who had said, "*Mais alors, c'est formidable*," and let the matter rest there. The Frenchman returned a few days later, and for the *préfet's* lack of zeal reported both him and Schiaparelli to the Kommandantur. Schiaparelli did not know what happened to the *préfet*.

In the night the Fiend was once more on the war path; his screamings in the courtyard woke me. It was pitch dark. I could hear the supplicating voice of a man he was beating up and the dull thud of something heavy hitting something soft ...the agonizing yells of the victim...innumerable men's voices arguing, the Fiend's voice rising well above the com-

motion . . . the sound of heavy feet tramping back to the enormous steel door of the courtyard . . . the sound of the bolt being shot back . . . the voices of the Fiend, the soldiers, and the victim's screams getting fainter and fainter as they went farther into the bowels of Cherche-Midi . . . the heavy tramping of the soldiers as they came up and once more crossed the courtyard . . . the banging of the various steel doors again. . . . I realized this place could boast of dungeons. . . .

The next day during *promenade* Louise told me that the cause of last night's trouble had been one of the soldiers criticizing the Army, a fatal thing for a German soldier to do.

Since Grand'mère had tried to smuggle the letters out, as a punishment smoking was forbidden. The soldiers, however, brought me more or less what I needed. I had not seen the Fussy Man for some time, but as he passed through the courtyard he smiled and gave me a cigarette, which, since he had given it to me I presumed I could smoke. The Bully roared, and the Fussy Man interpreted, adding under his breath, "Smoke it upstairs."

During the afternoon the Bald-headed Man unbolted my cell and said, "A lady from the Red Cross."

"You mean for me?"

"Yes, for you."

It was such a surprise that I could hardly take in the fact.

"Come along, come along," he said.

I leaped off the bed; the enormous steel doors were open—I was across the landing and down the stairs in a flash. I did not even notice the Fussy Man standing on the landing. The only thought in my mind was that there was some one from the Red Cross who wanted to see me. I was brought to a

standstill by both men trying to catch me up and shouting, "Have you gone mad?"

"But you said there was some one to see me."

"No, no, you can not see her—it is not allowed. She has brought you some food."

They led me back to the landing. In my excitement I had not even noticed the table. It was covered with a clean white tablecloth and laden with sandwiches of white bread filled with Russian salads, pots of jam and marmalade, tins of canned fish and fresh fruit—luscious peaches and bunches of grapes. It was a staggering sight.

My two guards pressed me to take all I wanted, but my disappointment was so acute at not seeing the "lady from the Red Cross" that, although recently I would have eaten dry bread with pleasure, the sight of all this food did not even tempt me. It was my guards who gave me more than my share. I arranged my booty on my bed, and was annoyed with myself for being so disappointed. I had thought I was beyond any form of feeling. However, I found the sandwiches delicious, I had not tasted white bread for so long. I wondered if our benefactress could realize how much her gift would mean. . . .

In the evening voices from the courtyard floated up to my cell; the soldiers were singing the *Horst Wessel Song*. It brought back memories of the Soissons bakery, which now seemed so remote that it had no more reality than a dream.

The next day, on coming upstairs after *promenade*, I found the Bald-headed Man and the Fussy Man talking excitedly to each other. They beckoned Darby and me and told us we were to be "tried" the following day.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"I've seen your name over at the Kommandantur on the list for to-morrow," the Bald-headed Man replied.

They both said they did not know what the charge was.

I began to look forward to the morning. At least it would be something definite.

On waking I spent most of the next morning trying to tidy myself. I combed my hair and tried to clean my uniform. Since there was nowhere to put one's clothes, I had always hung them on a knob of the wire and steel contraption which opened and closed the window. The whitewash from the walls made my uniform look more white than khaki; with a little effort I made it look fairly presentable.

The day brought forth no trial, but it was of momentous importance to me, for my visitor was the Gestapo man.

7

Cherche-Midi: Cross-examination

As I COULD HEAR Darby's voice, I knew her cell must be open. She was talking to some one speaking English with a deep, resonant voice; he spoke so fluently that I took him to be English. I heard Darby say, "Oh, no," with such misery that I wondered what the bad news could be. It might be we were to be separated; little as we saw of each other in the prison, at least we had not lost contact completely.

I was still lying on my bed when the Bald-headed Man unbolted my door; the Fussy Man was with him. A huge man stepped forward entirely blocking the doorway. He wore a grey flannel suit and might have been English, American, anything. His face was striking, his eyes being the most outstanding feature. They were deep and penetrating, and immediately held one's attention. His manner and speech were as direct as his appearance. He said, "I've just been talking to your friend."

"What about?"

"I have come to see how you are."

"I don't suppose you found her very happy?"

"No—" He broke off abruptly. "My dear girl, your skin!"

"Oh, that..."

The swelling had now gone, but my face was scarred by

bites, and I had long since lost interest in it; but my visitor seemed appalled.

"'Have you been to the doctor?"

"Yes, I have, but there is nothing he can do except give me some soap. The only way to cure my skin is to kill the bugs."

"I know that, but it's impossible to fumigate this prison satisfactorily."

"I realize that."

There was a slight pause, which was broken by three abrupt questions.

"Are you well treated?"

I refused to be drawn and shrugged my shoulders.

"Do you get enough to eat?"

"We get a certain amount of food."

"Are people kind to you?"

It was too much of a coincidence that he should ask the same questions in the same order as those I had mentioned in my diary.... So he had read it. Was that why he was here? If he wished to discuss it he would; if he did not, I guessed that it would be hopeless to try to get anything out of him.

"Are people kind to you?" repeated for the second time, broke into my thoughts.

The Bald-headed Man and the Fussy Man were still in the background; I indicated them both. "These gentlemen have been kind to me."

He interpreted what I had said. The two men clicked their heels and bowed, and the Fussy Man rattled off something in German, which my visitor interpreted literally. "He regrets he can not speak English, as he would like to make you a charming speech."

"Oh, how very nice of him! Will you tell him at Soissons

I met quite a lot of Germans and they taught me to say *auf Ihr Wohl.* Had I any wine I'd drink to his health with pleasure."

I had hit the right nail on the head. The atmosphere became convivial.

"Is there anything you want?" my visitor inquired.

I thought of my diminishing cigarettes and asked if I could have a packet. The Bald-headed Man produced a packet from his pocket. My visitor told me my guard had just brought them from the canteen and asked rather apologetically if I would pay for them. I got off the bed and handed the money to the Bald-headed Man without a smile at this official transaction. Ordinarily he seldom let me pay.

"Have you any matches?" my visitor inquired.

"I have just a few."

"What is the good of cigarettes without matches?" he said impatiently, handing me his box.

"You are the first person I have met here who sees that point; are you some high official?" I asked.

"I am an official—I wouldn't go so far as to say that I am a very high one."

"You speak English without a trace of accent."

"That is a compliment."

"It's the truth. Your English is absolutely perfect."

"As a child I always had English governesses, and I spent a great deal of my time in England; I was over there just before the war started."

"You are the first German I have not seen in uniform."

"I don't always wear it."

"Why have you come to see me?"

"I heard you were here, and I was interested."

"Can you tell me how long I shall remain here?"

"I'm afraid for the duration of the war."

I heard myself saying, "Oh, no," in exactly the same tone as Darby.

"You will not stay here. In a few days you will all be moved to Fresnes, which is one of the most modern prisons in France."

"If we are to be kept in solitary confinement it's hardly a question of sending us to another prison; what we shall need is a lunatic asylum and padded cells." The bitterness in my voice surprised me.

"Have you no books to read?"

I waved my visitor into my cell, but he didn't bother to look.

"I will send you some English books; they will help you to pass the time."

"When will you send them?"

"This afternoon."

Had he said to-morrow I should hardly have believed him. How many times had we been told that this, that, and the other would happen to-morrow, only for us to draw a blank, but I felt my visitor would keep his word.

Here at last from out of the blue was an official who actually seemed to know something about us, and he had told me we were here for duration. I felt too sick at heart to take any further interest, and muttered, "Thank you." Our eyes met, and I found myself thinking, "'You are really quite a human person. Surely you are too intelligent to believe in all this fantastic Nazism. . . ."

I became conscious that I was staring into a pair of blue-gray eyes. I had no idea how long we had been staring at each other.

As I turned away feeling rather embarrassed I heard his resonant voice saying, "Have courage."

The Bald-headed Man bolted me in, and I paced up and down. Why on earth should that man say, "Have courage"? Is Fresnes as bad as this, and he knows one will need courage to bear it for the duration? Or is it possible that in some way or another he knows I have no intention of enduring it for long? It was impossible to guess the reason, but I could not get his words out of my head.

I lit one of the cigarettes and went over his visit in my mind: "Is there anything you want?" I must be mad. I had often thought I was going mad and now I knew I must be. All I had asked for was a packet of cigarettes! Could I cable to England? Could I get in touch with the American Ambassador or Consul or Huffer? Why was I here? What was the charge against me? All questions of real importance I had never thought to ask, and I had just been in touch with a man who probably knew the answers and who might have told me. There it was.... At last I definitely knew that I was mad. I was quite mad. That did not worry me. The crux of the matter I now knew: "I'm afraid you will be here for duration."

I threw myself on the bed and fell into my customary doze.

During *promenade* Darby managed to exchange a few sentences. "Did that man come to see you?" she whispered hurriedly. "It looks as though we are stuck here."

"Yes. Did he ask you if there was anything you wanted?"

"Yes, he did."

"What did you ask for?"

"Some things to be brought up from my knapsack—why?"

"You didn't by any chance ask if you could send a cable—or if you could get into touch with any one?"

"No, I didn't—how damn' silly. Did you?"

"No."

Darby said, "One should make a list of all the questions one wants to ask. These officials arrive so suddenly that I'm too surprised to ask much, and anyway most of them know nothing about us."

Later on in the afternoon the Bald-headed Man came to my cell. The Fussy Man was still with him. They were holding an armful of books. "Your friend is downstairs and he will do something for you," the Bald-headed Man said, looking excited and pleased.

"My friend! Do you mean a French poilu?"

"No, no—your friend."

I looked at them blankly. "I haven't got a friend, unless you mean Monsieur Huffer, the commandant of my unit."

"No, your friend of this morning."

"Oh! You mean that man. Who is he?"

The Bald-headed Man pronounced something in German. I said, "What on earth does that mean?"

"It means Criminal Investigation Department."

"Is that the Gestapo?"

"Yes."

"So he is attached to that. . . ." It did not surprise me. After all, sooner or later my diary was bound to find its way there and would have to be read by some one who knew English.

"How do you know my friend will do something for me?"

"Because when we went from here to the Kommandantur he told us he would."

"What will he do?"

"We do not know."

"Do you really think he will do something?"

"Yes, we are sure of it. Otherwise, why should he tell us he would? He has sent you and your comrade these books. You must choose quickly—we can't stay any longer."

I chose the first three without looking at the titles—I was too surprised to take much interest in the books.

So now I had a "friend," a most intelligent, capable one, who held some important position with the Gestapo. My "friend" obviously had read my diary and from it had come to the conclusion that I was in no way guilty of espionage, or, for that matter, of any serious offence.

I now knew enough about the Germans to realize that should I stand in a shadow of doubt I need expect no mercy; but the gods had been with me. It must be clear from my diary that I had done nothing more than drive an ambulance for the French Government. Had the Gestapo man come to any other conclusion he would not have dreamed of sending me books or helping me in any way. So what! Now I had a "friend." My first instinct was to get hold of him again and pour out my troubles, but I realized his job was to separate the sheep from the goats. Weeping or gnashing of teeth would be neither here nor there.

A definite feeling of hope grew within me. I found my brain trying to function once more. I must try to get hold of him again —it was imperative. Sooner or later we were bound to have some sort of "trial." At most of these interpreters were needed; in our particular case it would be essential, and one was entirely dependent on the interpretation being accurate and fair. Would my "friend" interpret for us?

My only chance of finding out was through the Bald-headed Man, whom I seldom saw these days, for the Fiend and the Bully were in chief command of us. There was nothing at all

to be done except console myself with patience. I turned my attention to my books. The first was a collection of Edgar Wallace short stories; the others were a romantic novel by Rafael Sabatini and *My Man Jeeves*, by Wodehouse. With these it was amazing how quickly the time slipped away.

I did not see the Bald-headed Man until he crossed the courtyard the following day during *promenade*. I went up to him and said, "I must speak to you. When can you come over to see me?"

"I am very busy at the Kommandantur, but I will come when I can."

He came late in the afternoon, and, handing me a little parcel wrapped in paper, said, "Here is a piece of white bread with butter." I was too absorbed with what I wanted to say to take in the magnitude of his gift or even thank him.

"I must see that man from the Gestapo again. Is it possible?"

He shook his head. "I do not know when I shall see him."

"Can't you possibly get hold of him?"

"I'm afraid not, but he will surely come back for his books. I have brought you a piece of white bread and butter—I do my very best for you, my very best."

This was only too true; I felt so disappointed that I could not speak.

"I must go now. I should not be here at all."

It was some time before I could bring myself to appreciate the piece of white bread and butter. Then I wondered to what lengths he had gone to bring it to me.

With the books finished I returned to my old lethargic ways. Twenty-two noughts were now marked on my wall.

A few days later in the courtyard I saw the Kommandant of the Cherche-Midi talking to the Sly One. He beckoned to me. The Sly One interpreted and said, "You will be questioned to-morrow, and I have been told to interpret for you."

This was news. From the mixture of broken French and English I gathered the Kommandant was asking me if I had ever done any espionage.

"No, never," I replied.

He seemed rather amused and in very good humor.

"If you are guilty of espionage . . ." He made a suggestive gesture, running his finger across his throat, and grinned all over his face.

I could not take him seriously and asked the Sly One to tell him that I was glad I should be questioned to-morrow, as I had had enough of this place.

The Kommandant seemed to appreciate my remark and nodded his dismissal.

Darby managed to get close enough to me to say, "What did he want?"

"We are to be questioned to-morrow."

"We've heard that before."

"Yes, but if the Kommandant has said so I should imagine we would be."

The next day, toward evening, a soldier whom I had not seen before unbolted my door and told me to follow him. I found Darby and the Sly One outside in the corridor. I had not been looking forward to this moment with any anticipation; I was beyond thinking about it. Now that the moment had actually arrived I found myself quite unperturbed; the only feeling I had was that at last we should know what it was all about. Darby was in the same frame of mind.

With the Sly One, who was Alsatian and knew French and German as her mother tongues, we followed our guard through steel doors and innumerable corridors which were new to us; we were shown into a medium-sized room which contained a large desk and several chairs. A soldier was sitting at a table with a typewriter in front of him; two other soldiers with rifles and tin helmets were standing to attention.

In a few moments the Kommandant came and sat at a desk facing us. He had brought with him two large green folders which he placed in front of him. Across one was written "Fräulein Darby"; on the other "Fräulein Myers." He opened the one marked Fräulein Darby, and I watched him glancing through typewritten sheets.

He spoke to the soldier by the typewriter, and although they were speaking German I several times caught the word "espionage." He turned to Darby, but, realizing that he would have to speak through an interpreter, addressed himself to the Sly One. We could make little sense of the charge until we realized that Darby was accused of having said to one of the doctors at Soissons, "When the English arrive they will show the Germans how to behave."

To dare to criticize the Germans was serious.

"My God, Myers, I'll probably get years for this," Darby said.

As it was possible she might, "It's a grand life if you don't weaken," was all I could think of to say.

Endless questions were put by the Kommandant through the Sly One. When had Darby joined the Mechanized Transport Corps? Why had she joined it? What had she done before that? What date did she come to France? And where exactly had she been while in France? Where and how was

she taken prisoner? How did it come about that she was at Soissons?

Over and over again she denied ever having spoken to a German doctor in that way, or having discussed the Germans. But the Kommandant was adamant. Although up till then he had been very patient, he seemed to think the true facts were in front of him in black and white, and that Darby was being perverse.

"Do not deny it," he said. "Do not lie. The charge against you as it is now is not serious—lie, and it may become so."

"But I'm not lying. I never spoke to any German doctor the whole time I was at Soissons, except one who came over to the French wing which was being run as a maternity ward. Then we only spoke for a few minutes about the mothers and babies."

We then found that there had been a mistake in the interpretation. The accusation was that she had made the remark to a French doctor.

This was too much for Darby. Seething with rage she turned to me and, regardless of every one and forgetting we were in the Kommandant's room, we lapsed into a heated argument in English.

"To think one of the French doctors could do such a thing! Why, why, should he do such a thing to me?"

I quickly murmured, "It's the snake in the grass."

"Yes, but it may get me years.... To think that I came to France to help them and this is what they do to me!"

I saw that going off at a tangent about the doctors at Soissons at that moment would do anything but help. I knew Darby well enough to know that she had never made that remark. The Kommandant could not have dropped a bigger

hint than to say that as the accusation stood it was not serious. Therefore, although not true, it seemed best to admit it; after all, it was her word against a French doctor's, and the Kommandant had already explained that if she denied it the whole case would have to be referred back to Soissons, the doctor brought to Paris, and the delay incurred might mean months.

It was incredibly petty, yet we both knew how serious it could be—two years for saying *sales Boches*.

Darby admitted that she might have made that remark to one of the French doctors. The Kommandant continued to glance at the sheets before him and read out the second charge made by the same French doctor—that Darby frequently went over to the German side of the hospital to see whether she could hear any of the orders given during a *rappel*. Without the baker, Henri, and myself, Darby had never been over to the German side, and she said, "Myers, they must be mistaking me for you," and emphatically told the Kommandant it was not true.

"But you have been seen there," he told her.

If they wanted to bring that absurd charge, then it was just as well for me to insist that Darby must have been mistaken for me. After all, they had in my diary the number of times I had been there, so I chipped in: "Mademoiselle Darby never went to the German side of the hospital. I'm sure there must be some misunderstanding; she must have been mistaken for me."

The Kommandant asked why I had gone there. I explained I went to fetch things from the official interpreter's *bureau*, which happened to be that side of the hospital, also to fetch milk for the mothers.

"Were you ever there during a *rappel* or when there was a large gathering of soldiers?"

"I saw only one official grouping of soldiers and that was when one of the doctors got about fifty soldiers and nurses in a group to be photographed."

"You were never there while a *rappel* was held?"

"No, never."

"How many times did you go over that side of the hospital?"

"Oh, three or four times. I really can't remember exactly—I know I went one day in the morning and again later in the afternoon."

The Kommandant seemed not to press the point of Darby's being seen over on the German side, and continued with the French doctor's last remarks, which were that she went about the hospital in such a proud and haughty manner that, regardless of the other facts, the doctor wished her removed.

There was not much one could answer to that except what Darby said. She was reserved and shy by nature, and she thought the doctor at Soissons must have entirely misconstrued the situation.

Everything took such a time, even the slightest sentence. First the Kommandant spoke to the Sly One, who in turn interpreted it in French. Darby replied in French, and this again had to be interpreted in German. Then the Kommandant made a synopsis which he dictated slowly to the soldier at the typewriter; typewritten sheets were gradually piling up by his side.

The Kommandant earlier on had abruptly turned to me and asked, "Have you ever done any espionage?"

"No, never."

"Well, it is best for you that you have not done so. If you have you will be shot."

I did not take the remark seriously. I had been longing to smoke for some time and, looking at the large box of cigarettes in front of the Kommandant, said, "I have not done any espionage, but if you are thinking of shooting me the least you can do is to let me smoke beforehand."

The Kommandant said, "Ah, so! ... You would like to smoke?"

"Yes, I should very much."

He offered cigarettes to us both. Darby, who seldom smoked, took one; I imagine she needed it. He also offered them around the room and there was a slight complication with the soldiers on guard, as apparently they were not allowed to smoke with their steel helmets on. However, the difficulty was overcome by their taking their helmets off.

While the questions continued and the hours passed the Kommandant made no comment when I frequently helped myself to his cigarettes.

Darby was asked every conceivable question about her family; and all particulars of the Mechanized Transport Corps were minutely gone into. Was it a military organization? Where did we get the petrol? Did the Army supply us?

I chipped in occasionally, but where we got our petrol from was difficult to answer, for Huffer's *maréchal des logis* had always seen to the petrol and oil for our ambulances, and we had no idea where he had procured it. We explained that to the Kommandant and assured him we had nothing to do with the Army except to carry their wounded, and at last we made him understand that the Château de Blois was a unit organized by Huffer, an American, the ambulances given by Americans and

the drivers English, but attached to the Mechanized Transport Corps, an English organization whose members in France were under the command of the French Government.

It was the Kommandant who said, "But the Château de Blois unit then is an international affair—American, English, and French?"

The last question was about our uniform, which had always puzzled the Germans. Why was it khaki? Why was it an exact replica of that of English officers?

We explained that the head of our unit in London had chosen it.

"Then the English Government did not give it to you?"

"No, we are nothing whatsoever to do with the English Government. They gave us permission to come over to France as ambulance drivers, but that was all. We are an entirely voluntary organization, and we paid for our uniforms ourselves."

This seemed to conclude Darby's questioning. It had lasted three and a half hours without a break.

The Kommandant rose, said he was going to have his dinner, and left the room. The soldier finished typing and followed him. The Sly One picked up the typewritten sheets and sentence by sentence interpreted the *résumé* which the Kommandant had made.

Everything Darby had said was accurately and concisely stated; in fact, the Sly One said it was most favorable toward her. Darby had to sign each page. She signed the last one with a flourish.

The Bald-headed Man came in and anxiously asked, "How does it go?"

"We really don't know. The charge is so silly. Our inter-

preter seems to think that the Kommandant has given the best possible aspect."

The Bald-headed Man quickly looked through the sheets, muttering, "Very good, very good. And your sheets?" he asked me.

"Oh, I haven't got any yet; I have not been questioned."

"I hope it will go very well for you too."

"Thank you very much. Nobody hopes that more than I do."

It was not quite dark. We were on the second floor, and the barred window of the room looked out on to the street. Below was a small garden surrounded by a high wall. I could see the people sitting and strolling along the boulevard; I envied them, but they were not so very free, for a whispered word, an accusation, and they would be in the prison.

The Kommandant returned with the soldier who had been typing; the Bald-headed Man bowed to him and slipped out of the room. The Kommandant sat down and told Darby that he did not want her any more. She could return to her cell and rest. "You look very tired," he added.

Darby illustrated the truth of the saying that one can go as white as a sheet. The blood had drained from her face, and she looked ghastly. She told the Kommandant that she preferred to stay with me. We all sat down once more, and the Kommandant picked up the folder with my name and said, "Fräulein Myers, you are held here on the charge of espionage."

I shall never forget what a feeling of comfort the pressure of Darby's hand on my knee gave me. "Poor old Myers," she muttered.

"This is quite fantastic," I told the Kommandant.

He shrugged his shoulders and asked me a few questions

about my family. When I had joined the M.T.C. he already knew, and that I had been to Angoulême, for all the particulars Darby had given him of her travels applied also to me.

The Kommandant leaned back in his chair and droned on and on in German; the soldier was kept busy typing as fast as he could. I watched half an hour pass by the clock on the mantel-piece, and still the Kommandant droned on and the typewriter clicked away. It was infuriating to have probable years of one's life sentenced away on the typewriter without following a word. I could bear it no longer and banged on the table. Every one looked up in surprise. "Will you please tell the Kommandant," I said to the Sly One, "that I want to know what he is saying about me. I want to know the exact charge. I am not guilty of espionage at all. If I had any information I would not know how to pass it on. I am simply an ambulance driver, nothing more; and I want to be sent to a neutral country."

The Kommandant nodded to the Sly One's interpretation and continued to drone away in German. The typewriter clicked away.

I felt it was hopeless to intervene again. There it was; my fate was being sealed for me, and I could do nothing about it but wait for the result. I knew the importance to the German mind of papers and documents. These typewritten sheets would be very much my "affairs." Upon them rested my future, and all I could do was to watch my future being typed away.

At last the Kommandant finished. He told me the Sly One would interpret what he had dictated and that he would return in a few minutes. I have forgotten now the exact wording of the document; not having a German viewpoint, I could

not possibly have written it as well as the Kommandant had done. It was to the effect that I was not interested in politics, neither had been my father or mother or my grandparents, or any member of my family. We were not a politically minded family, and I knew nothing about politics whatsoever.

I had been accused of espionage, but no precise charge had been made against me. I desired to know the exact accusation. I was an ambulance driver and guilty of no offense against the German people. As I was attached to the Red Cross, I desired to be sent to a neutral country.

The document gave a brief description of my family and circumstances, and said that I had listened to Mary Darby's statement giving particulars of how and why we came to France, why we had stayed there, and where we had been taken prisoners, which I declared were absolutely true.

I signed each page, and when the Kommandant returned with the Bald-headed Man I asked him if he personally thought I was guilty of espionage.

"Fräulein Myers," the Kommandant replied, "if I thought either of you was guilty of espionage do you think that I should have questioned you in each other's presence? I'm sure you have a clear conscience, and there is no reason why you should not sleep well to-night."

"Except for the bugs, I might," I replied.

The Kommandant smiled and shrugged his shoulders. So I went on, "You can understand we simply hate being here. Do you think we really will be sent to a neutral country?"

The Kommandant said he did not know, it rested entirely with the Kommandantur.

"But what do you think?" I persisted.

"Well, you can always hope," he replied.

"But what is this silly charge of espionage against me? You don't believe it?"

"Since there is a charge against Fräulein Darby, and you have been her close companion, until she is cleared you are held as her accomplice."

I realized now that we swam or sank together; my diary had not been mentioned, but had it been brought against me, then Darby would be held with me for that.

It was now getting on for a quarter to twelve. The Kommandant offered a final round of his cigarettes and gave Darby and me three English books each from a pile in the corner of the room—so the Gestapo man had brought a good collection of them. We thanked the Kommandant, and, as the atmosphere seemed so friendly, I asked if I might fetch several odds and ends which I needed from our peasant's bundle. The Kommandant nodded and told the Bald-headed Man to take me down the next day to fetch what I wanted. We parted in a cordial manner and thanked the Sly One for her interpretation.

We knew that interpretation by a fellow-prisoner could never be legally correct, but although she looked sly (and probably was) we never doubted the accuracy of her interpretation.

It was the Bald-headed Man who led us back through the innumerable corridors to our cells. It was now pitch dark, and we followed him by the light of his torch. When we reached our own corridor we met the young doctor who had spent such a pleasant time at Margate. A light was switched on, and for a few minutes we stood and chatted.

The Bald-headed Man asked me if I had eaten my supper.

"No," I replied. "I was just about to when we were told to go down to the Kommandant."

The Bald-headed Man thought my cell too dark for me to grope around for my food, so by the light of his torch he found my bread and the small portion of paste, which happened to be very good that night, and brought it to me in the corridor. As we never had any knives, we had no method of breaking our quarter loaves of bread other than by tearing them with our fingers; when the Bald-headed Man automatically produced a pen-knife and cut and pasted me slices of bread I felt I had returned to the refinements of life.

The two Germans were terribly interested in what had passed. We told them the Kommandant had been most patient, kind, and helpful, and that we were sure he believed us innocent of any crime, and I added with joy that he had put in my questionnaire that I wished to be sent to a neutral country. They dolefully shook their heads; I knew they liked us and sympathized with us and they wished us all the best; if they could do anything to help us, I knew they would, but they said, "How would it be possible to send you to a neutral country? Neutral countries no longer exist. If you are innocent, which we are sure you are, you will not be kept in prison, but will be sent to an internment camp for the duration of the war. England is interning all German people, therefore we will do likewise. Do not think you will be freed. You will be interned; that will be much better than imprisonment."

I protested, "I can not agree with you. Why should the Kommandant of his own accord have put in my statement that I wished to be sent to a neutral country?"

"Oh, he wished to encourage you," said the young doctor.

"I do not believe that. If the Kommandant wished to encourage me he would not do so unless there was some hope. Otherwise to do so would be cruelty, and the Kommandant is not a cruel man."

Doubtfully they looked at me. The Bald-headed Man went to investigate some bangings on one of the cell doors. He came back and said one of the prisoners was very hungry; could I spare a little bread?

"Yes, I can spare some bread, but I am afraid not any paste."

"Oh, she did not ask for paste," the Bald-headed Man hurriedly said.

The excitement of the evening had taken the edge off my appetite. "You can give her three slices." I watched him cut them without a qualm. He returned, and we continued to chat in the corridor until the Bald-headed Man said regretfully, "It is time for you to go to bed."

Darby said—and it was so true that I shall never forget her remark—"Well, Myers, at least we've had a night out."

To those who have not been subject to absolute solitary confinement in a small space it is impossible to appreciate what those five hours of contact with human beings meant. It certainly had been a night out for us.

Before we were bolted into our respective cells we hurriedly said, "Good night, Myers," "Good night, Darby, until we meet again, and it's a great life if you don't weaken."

"Sleep well," said the Bald-headed Man in response to my "Good night."

Waschen and my usual doze afterwards—until I was awakened by a strange soldier unbolting my door, and from his signs I realized that I was to follow him. As I never washed at

Waschen those days I hastily combed my hair and put some powder and lipstick on to make the best of a bad job. The Sly One was standing outside my door.

"Where is my friend?" I asked.

She had no idea; she said she had been told to interpret for me only. The moment I had so dreaded had apparently arrived; the endless questions about my diary would now be asked. I had imagined myself going through every type of emotion, but I felt indifferent.

We were not led through the innumerable corridors of the previous night, but down the main stairway into the courtyard. The Kommandant was sitting on a bench in the sun, and it struck me that were I to be questioned seriously it would not be in the courtyard. The Kommandant beckoned us to sit down beside him on the bench. He smiled, said, "Good morning," and offered us cigarettes. His questions were brief and took only a few minutes. He wanted the fullest particulars about Herman Huffer—why and how and when he had inaugurated the Château de Blois unit. For the first time the Sly One was at a loss for a word; it was only after much thought and conversation with the Kommandant that she came to the conclusion the German word for *château* was *Schloss*. I explained that I thought Herr Huffer was in Bordeaux, but the American Embassy and the American and French Red Cross could give full particulars of him. I could not remember whether his address was 25 or 125 Avenue Henri Martin, but the Embassy would know. The Kommandant scribbled a few notes, and the Sly One told me he hoped that "our affairs" would soon be arranged.

"I hope that they soon will be." I repeated what I had said last night: "We simply hate being here."

The Kommandant said he could well understand. He rose as though to dismiss us. There were two soldiers standing on guard in the courtyard as well as the one who had brought us down. It had been such a joy sitting in the sunshine that I didn't want to move. I asked the Sly One to tell the Kommandant that I so appreciated the sun that I should like to sit there for a few more minutes. The Sly One replied, "But you know it is not allowed for us to stay here. We must go back to our cells."

"Will you ask the Kommandant if we can stay here? He may give us permission."

She raised and lowered her eyes, twisted and turned and muttered broken sentences to the Kommandant; she could not have behaved in a more suggestive manner. Her attitude so infuriated me that I cut her short and, pointing to the sun and the bench, said, "*Fünf Minuten.*"

The Kommandant understood and said five minutes only, with a smile. We returned to the bench, and he again offered us cigarettes. The Sly One told me that the Kommandant well understood I had no wish to return to my cell.

The Kommandant took a snap of me with his camera. I told him when I got back to England—and I put the accent on the *when*—my family would be very interested to see a snapshot of him. Would he allow me to take one? He replied his wife might not like it, and in any case he did not consider his features photogenic. He told us the "*fünf Minuten*" were over; the Sly One and I were led back to our cells.

The few minutes' break in the sun made all the difference to my otherwise weary existence, as for some reason or other we had no *promenade* that day.

Twenty-four noughts.... At *Waschen* Grand'mère was

chatty and full of news; to-morrow for sure we were going to Fresnes. I had heard the rumor so often that I could hardly bring myself to believe we were off to-morrow, even though the Gestapo man had said we would go.

Grand'mère was full of Fresnes. She told me there was running water in the cells. "And I suppose two sheets and a pillowslip for each bed?" I asked.

"All the beds have sheets—everything is very clean," she said.

"We don't have reading lamps as well by any chance?"

Grand'mère thought I was being unduly cynical.

In the evening the Bully brought the Sly One to my cell. She told me that we were leaving to-morrow morning at five o'clock and that I was to be ready. The Bald-headed Man came to say good-by.

"But aren't you coming too? I thought all the German soldiers were."

"I shall follow later. I have to clear things up at the Kommandantur."

"Shall I see you when you get to Fresnes?"

"I do not think so; the men will be in a different section."

"Won't you be able to come over to see me?"

"I will do so if I can, but I do not think it will be allowed."

"So I shall not see you again?"

"No, I do not think so."

He stayed and chatted for a few minutes, and I felt very sad when he left, for I had said good-by to a friend.

Our large peasant's bundle was kept downstairs with our knapsacks, so I had little to get ready. Fresnes could hardly be worse than the Cherche-Midi, and might be better; there would probably be no bugs. From the moment they had

started to bite they had never ceased in their attacks, but I didn't fear any more bites on my feet or legs, as they were already covered with them. I had learned from experience that if one could break the skin and squeeze the bites the irritation ceased. Scratching had been my usual method, but occasionally I had used too much zeal. The last few days I had been unable to wear a shoe with any comfort, as I had scratched the top of my right foot raw. It struck me that a far less painful method might be to prick each bite with a pin; I took a safety-pin from my uniform. My legs became appallingly sore and looked, if possible, worse, but they no longer irritated.

I did not sleep, and in my tossings and turnings listened to the woman sobbing in the cell next to mine. I could hear her quite clearly through the wall. She had arrived in the afternoon; she was Polish, and her name was Zeta. Occasionally her sobs broke into groans which reminded me of the men dying from gangrene at Soissons. It is better, I reflected, to listen to other people's groans than to your own. David again started his mournful dirge. Fresnes could be no worse....

The Fiend called us at four in the morning; the dawn had not yet broken. I half-dressed sleepily, but in the darkness could not find my garter. This was a serious loss, as I had nothing with which to keep up my stocking.

In honour of our new prison I had a desultory wash, and on returning to my cell continued my search by the light in the corridor. The young doctor from Margate was about to close my door when I told him I was looking for my garter. He translated this to the Fiend, who for answer slammed the door in my face. I came to the conclusion that the Fiend was a psychological case. We had been allowed ten minutes for

Waschen that morning and during that time he had stood with a fairly amiable expression banging his revolver against the enormous steel door. Just as a child can amuse itself by thumping on something for the sheer joy of the noise it creates, so had the Fiend been enjoying himself. What would make him suffer most, perhaps, would be to tie him up and leave him in complete silence.

It was now quite light. Just before we were due to start the Bald-headed Man came to see me. I told him that in the darkness I must have kicked my garter outside, and he went into the corridor to look for it; to my joy he returned with the familiar, dirty piece of elastic. It was really good-by this time.

We were marshaled on to the landing. We each had to answer to our names in the courtyard; there were twenty-one of us. Our parcels were packed into a lorry which was large enough to take us all in comfort. Carmen Morey sat opposite me; she had one of the most unpleasant faces I had ever seen. Her large, loose mouth full of wolflike teeth stretched right across her face. She had a broad, ugly nose and hard, intelligent eyes. She was full of Fresnes, where the French had held her for a year. She gave a gloomy picture of the place; the food was appalling, and one was looked after by nuns.

"No one, Bessy, can be as cruel as women. Men may be brutal, but women are far more cruel."

I made no comment; Carmen Morey was cruel enough to be a good judge. She got on to her pet subject of being considered a second Mata Hari.

"But I always thought Mata Hari was supposed to be a very beautiful woman?"

"She was," said Carmen, purposely missing the point.

We rumbled along the streets, and my thoughts returned to the Cherche-Midi. I would not call the Herculean Man, Baron von X, the Fussy Man, the Bald-headed Man, the man from the Gestapo, or the Kommandant brutal or cruel; they were intelligent and probably the best type of Germans, but in the main I found the soldiers and the German nurses I had seen childlike in their minds. Their belief in everything they were told was amazing; they seemed to prefer to be told something rather than to think it out for themselves. I tried to put a finger on what it was they lacked as a nation. Perhaps a Spaniard whom I met some weeks later at Narbonne gave me the answer. He remarked that the English had a superiority complex, whereas the Germans suffered from an inferiority complex.

I replied, "If England wins this war alone her superiority complex will at least be justifiable, and I don't see how the Germans can have an inferiority one at the moment—after all, they control most of Europe."

"That is nothing, Señorita, for a complex is in the soul," he replied.

We turned down a long avenue shaded by trees, passed through a courtyard, and entered a second, where a line of French nuns stood waiting for us.

8

Fresnes Prison

The prison of Fresnes is near Fontainebleau; I believe it may have improved since I was there, but our arrival would have made a good prelude to Dante's Inferno.

We were led to a washroom and told to leave our bundles there while the water for our showers was being heated. The attendant told us we were allowed these showers once a month. We were then taken across the passage to the room where prisoners were allowed to see visitors; it was divided by wire meshing which formed a narrow corridor down the center of the room. The prisoners were always kept in this narrow corridor while talking to their friends. As there were so many of us, we were separated into two groups, on each side of the netted partition, through which we could see each other and speak.

The attendant of this section of the prison was unique. Had she been portrayed in any play one's first reaction would be that she was hopelessly overdrawn; if Europe had been searched for a harder, more brutal-mannered woman to be put in charge, a better choice could not have been made. My dealings with her were perfunctory, so I do not know whether under that granite-like exterior lay a heart of gold, silver, or stone.

Darby was my side of the room; Schiaparelli was comfort-

ing Collette, who was in tears; the Brisk Woman was consoling the Sly One, who had completely broken down; Zeta the Polish woman was still sobbing and writhing in pain—she had acute appendicitis. Zeta was in prison because she had dismissed her cook, who had since borne a grudge against her and had reported to the Germans that her mistress's behavior was suspicious. There was no specific charge yet against Zeta. The little Mouse sat against the wall, silent as usual. Carmen Morey was sniffing around like a dog; on the other side of the wire partition Louise, Jeanne, and Marie, the magnificent Polish woman, were quite calm; every one else was in tears.

It had been an anticlimax; at the Cherche-Midi we had hoped for better things. Most of us were not weaklings, but many realized that years of our lives might be spent in that prison; we formed a desolate picture. It was the general collapse, which was not a pretty sight to watch, that made me think—I have read about suffering and hell, but here it was before me.

My nerves were on edge, and I let Carmen Morey hold my attention on her pet subject—herself. She told me that for many years she had lived in Berlin with her German *fiancé*. I gathered they had both carried on espionage for the Germans. The rift in the lute was caused by her *fiancé's* friendship with a man, and Carmen's being madly jealous. They carried on a *ménage à trois* for some time until the two men left together for Paris. Months passed. Carmen told me how she had suffered. Eventually she heard that her *fiancé* had been seriously hurt in a motor accident, and was in hospital in Paris and wanted her to go to him. Some of her German friends advised her against it, as they smelled a rat. She paid

no attention to their advice, took the next train to Paris, but was arrested as she got out of the train. Later she found that her *fiancé* had been promised immunity by the French Government if he could effect her arrest. However, as soon as they had Carmen Morey, they arrested him and the man with whom he had been associating.

"Well, what happened to you all?" I asked wearily.

"After two years' imprisonment and trials we were both condemned to death. We were taken to a town outside Paris; my *fiancé* was shot. The Germans entered the next day and released me."

"What happened to the other man?"

"He was so effeminate," Carmen said gloatingly, "that he could not stand the Cherche-Midi for more than a year."

"And after that?"

"Oh, he died there."

"Were you upset when your *fiancé* was shot?"

"No, he deserved it. He had been my friend for so many years. . . . It just shows—you can trust no one."

"If I thought that, life would not be worth while living."

"It is true!" Carmen yelled.

"I do not agree with you at all—for example, I trust Darby."

Darby overheard my last remark and said, "I trust you, Myers."

It was all rather dramatic.

Carmen insisted that the war would soon be over; Germany had as good as won, and the King with our Royal Family was in Canada. She infuriated me to such a pitch that I found myself screaming at her. Darby said, "Myers, I must talk with you for a minute." Louise had made an urgent excuse and persuaded one of the nuns to unlock the doors; she had

whispered a few hurried words to Darby, "Tell Bessy Carmen Morey is only baiting her; she must not take the slightest notice."

I took Louise's advice and talked with the little Mouse, who seemed very lonely in her isolated silence. There had been some discussion among us as to whether it would be better to be guarded by soldiers or by nuns; opinions were divided, and I asked the Mouse what she thought

"I am not *religieuse*," she said.

"So you don't mind, then?"

The Mouse surprised me by becoming quite voluble, and in a short while I had heard much about her life. She had married very young, and had adored her daughter, an only child. The marriage had been very unhappy, for her husband had a distorted mind, but she remained with him, since she did not want to be parted from her child. By the time the girl was thirteen she had been completely turned by him against her mother, to whom she would not speak; then the girl became consumptive and was sent to a nursing home. The Mouse never saw her daughter again. She would neither see her mother nor write; the father was in complete control. When the Mouse wrote inquiring how her daughter was the girl replied in a brief note beginning "*Chère Madame*." During the time she was ill the correspondence between them was brief, and the Mouse told me that from then onward she always addressed her daughter as Mademoiselle.

"And is the breach healed now?"

"No, she never wanted to see me. My husband had entirely poisoned her mind."

"You never can tell, perhaps she'll be touched when you come out of prison."

"She died of consumption six months ago." The Mouse again sank into herself.

Schiaparelli had somehow managed to bring with her a bottle of rum, and was offering it around; alcohol never tasted better. We were all smoking like chimneys, as we had been told that all our paltry possessions would be taken from us. We did not mind temporarily losing our clothes, as when they had been fumigated they would be returned to us.

In groups of six we were taken to the washroom for our showers, prison clothes were handed out, and we were then sent back to the visitors' room and six more were sent along. The Petite Parisienne, who was fair, pretty, and chic, was among the first to return; she made us laugh, for she looked like a peacock shorn of its feathers. She assured us that the underclothes were funnier than the dress; to prove it she took off her knickers. The pattern belonged to some past epoch; each leg was about two yards wide, and the fullness gathered in at the waist with a piece of tape. The chemise had no shape at all and was equally wide. Both garments were of the coarsest calico. The stockings were of thick wool, hand-knitted, and came up to the knee, but, as there was nothing to hold them, they fell in folds around the ankles. The dress was made of heavy blue-and-white-striped cotton damask. The bodice had short sleeves and a square neck; the skirt was voluminous; it was gathered in at the waist and reached to the ankles. Carpet slippers completed the outfit.

The Petite Parisienne, like the Mouse, was in prison for saying *sales Boches*. She had heard from her husband that he was to be demobilized, and had returned to Paris to get their flat ready. While waiting for a train in the Métro two German officers complimented her on her attractive appearance. She

had replied, "*Sales Boches.*" She was arrested on the spot, and had been unable to leave a note for her husband to tell him where she was.

Darby provided the chief incident in the washroom by suddenly yelling for water. She had not realized that the water for the showers was controlled by the attendant. While she was in the middle of soaping herself the water was turned off, and it was only the general commotion made by us all that induced the woman to turn it on again.

Before the watchful eye of the attendant we had to strip and leave everything in a dust-sheet. We were allowed to take only a toothbrush, soap, and face flannel to our dormitory; even our hair was searched to see that we did not evade this rule. In the general hubbub, while we were being marshaled out of the room, I managed to dash back to my dust-sheet and snatch a few of the things I needed most.

While we were all waiting impatiently for the French Directeur to tell us the rules of the prison, Carmen Morey again described the soup.

The prison was completely controlled by the Germans, but they did not interfere with the French criminal prisoners who were there. These came under the charge of the French Directeur, and were looked after by nuns. The German soldiers who arrived from Cherche-Midi were to be put in an entirely separate part of the prison.

When the Directeur came he told us that although we were German political prisoners and under German authority, we should be looked after by the nuns and come under the ordinary rules of the prison. We might write letters on Wednesdays and Sundays; he could not tell us yet whether

we should be allowed visitors, and so far there was no arrangement for us to buy extra food. Smoking was absolutely forbidden.

We asked if there would be any work we could do, and were told there was none. The Directeur, a courteous, sympathetic man, said he hoped to have further instructions about us from the Germans.

The nuns, who looked fresh and clean, led us up to the first floor, to our dormitory, which was spotlessly clean. It was a long narrow room with polished boards. There were thirty beds split up into rows of ten. Each bed was sprung, and had a flock mattress, two coarse white calico sheets, a pillow and pillowslip, and two blankets. Along the length of the wall at the far end of the room was a narrow sink with ten taps. We tried them and found there was cold running water. There was a door on the left-hand side of the dormitory which led to the lavatory; this had running water too. Later when we asked the nuns why we could not open the window, which was heavily barred from the outside, we were told that an inspector who had visited the prison some years ago had ordered it to be shut; it had not been opened since.

The windows which ran the whole length of the dormitory were divided from the room by a brick wall four feet high, and from the top of this wall to the ceiling were bars placed close together. Wall and bars formed a corridor along which the nuns incessantly passed. They would stand there for hours watching us through the bars, and if our voices rose above a subdued whisper they would put their fingers to their lips: "Shush, shush, tut, tut." They were for ever counting us. Since we were securely locked in, if we were

not in the dormitory the only other possible place we could be was the lavatory.

It was only nine in the morning; we had nothing to do. As there were no chairs, we threw ourselves on the beds. The door was unlocked and a German officer looked in, but before Carmen Morey could try her usual Mata Hari tactics he had disappeared. The nuns returned to say the German authorities would not allow us to lie on the beds. We inquired whether we should stand, or sit on the floor, and the nuns said they would bring us up some chairs. They brought twenty-one low three-legged wooden stools without backs; we looked at them in horror. "Do we have to sit on these all days?" The nuns said there was nothing they could do; they would not even allow us to put our pillows on the stools—it was against the regulations. Since they would not give us work, the prospect of sitting on these stools all day long seemed refined torture.

After an hour the door was unlocked and we were taken across the passage into the dining-room. This was similar to our dormitory except that half of the room was divided off by a curtain; the far end was used as an infirmary. We had wooden benches to sit on at the dining-tables. The nuns dished out the soup from a large cauldron; we could have as much of it as we wanted, and take as much bread as we liked. The bread was always fresh.

Carmen had not exaggerated over the soup. To call it such was diabolical. Perhaps at the beginning of the month when it was first made there may have been some nourishment in it; it was made of mixed vegetables, carrots, turnips, peas, and potatoes, but after adding water daily the vegetables had become almost colourless and tasted like blotting paper. So

much for the soup. We had it and the bread at ten in the morning and again at three in the afternoon; it was all the food we had.

In the mornings and afternoons we were allowed to *promenade* for about twenty minutes in the courtyard, which was shared by French criminals and the juveniles. We were not allowed to mix; when one group was out the others had to be in. However, we did sometimes overlap.

Frenchwomen are allowed to have their babies with them in prison. They certainly must have had different food from ours, otherwise they could not have fed them. The juveniles certainly did; their kitchens were underneath our dormitory, and one of my worst memories of Fresnes was the smell wafting up of cooking steak and sizzling onions.

Sitting on the hard stools was body-breaking. Soup again at three. We were thankful when the nuns gave us nightdresses at eight o'clock and said we could go to bed. We were not allowed to talk after eight-thirty.

Louise suffered from a bad heart and could not lie down for too long at a stretch; Jeanne was not a good sleeper, as she was far from well. My bed was next to theirs, and they whispered together for a while; it was such a relief for me to get into bed that I fell asleep. When the nuns called us in the morning Carmen reported to them that Louise and Jeanne had been talking in the night, and they were told if this occurred again they would not be allowed out for *promenade* for a week. After this display of good-fellowship from Carmen she had the astonishing audacity to come over to my bed and ask for my eyebrow-tweezers, which she knew I had smuggled up. Her skin was so thick that I could not insult her. Her bed was next to the sink; two women had

used it during the night. Carmen thought this disgusting and said it ought to be reported to the nuns.

"Aren't you capable of dealing with these petty matters yourself?" I asked. "There are a good many of us here, and if you make yourself too objectionable you won't find life too pleasant."

Carmen said, "If I talk to them both will you support me?"

"Yes, I'll do that, provided you don't report them."

I hated to be associated with Carmen in any way, but in this case there was something to be said for her point of view. I walked over to the culprits. Their excuse was that they had been unable to find the lavatory light in the dark; they assured me their habits in future would be more hygienic.

Soon afterwards the Directeur came to our dormitory. We told him that bugs had been found on most of the beds—to prove it Marie had several in her hand. We assured him we could not have brought them in, as our clothes had been taken away and we had had showers. The only explanation he could give was that in the hurry to get the dormitory ready for us they had to borrow thirty beds from other prisons. Such a thing had never happened before in Fresnes.

The Directeur did not know if we should be allowed a canteen. He was sorry there was no work for us, but said he had absolutely insisted we should have books. We could also have some paraffin for the beds, and our face creams and personal effects would be returned to us to-day.

Zeta was still in great pain. The Directeur said she might lie on her bed and he would get a doctor to see her as soon as possible.

One by one we were taken by the nuns to fetch our odds and ends. Schiaparelli returned with a suitcase full of face lotions.

"Do you really think all that stuff makes any difference to your face?"

"Yes, I think it does. I always try to look as young as I can. I'm so afraid that six months here will age me."

"Do you think looking old matters so much?"

"It has made no difference to me so far, but I am twenty-two years older than my friend."

She showed me his photograph. He was a Swiss physical training instructor who lived in Paris. He had the face and figure of a Greek god.

"Have you known him long?"

"We have been very happy together for over five years."

Schiaparelli's outlook was that while there was any happiness to be had from their friendship she saw no reason why they should not enjoy it.

"I am young in my heart and body, and we love each other very much—but there it is: a time must come when I shall really be too old for him, but I hope it won't be yet. Meanwhile, I try to take care of my face."

I was told to go up and fetch my things; they had been stored away in a large room upstairs. A rosy-cheeked nun was in charge, assisted by a young woman in prison clothes. I had not very much to fetch—most of my few things I had already smuggled in—but I asked the nun if I could have a few puffs at a cigarette.

"Smoking is not allowed."

"I know, *mas cœur*, but just let me have one."

"Well, hurry, hurry, and if any Germans come put it out."

I dived into my greatcoat pocket and lit a cigarette. Even the smoke drifting away seemed wasted. . . .

The nun asked me why I was there. "I was an ambulance driver and was taken prisoner of war at the front."

If I could have made myself feel at all, my whole urge would have been to leave Fresnes, but here I was talking to a woman who had voluntarily chosen to be a prisoner for life.

While I was smoking the nun was busying herself around the room; her assistant said, "You are lucky to be able to smoke."

"I suppose you are not allowed to either."

"*No!*"

"Smoke them when you can," I said, handing her several, which she slipped under her dress.

"Have you been here long?"

"A year."

"Why?"

"I am a thief."

This simple statement momentarily brought me to a standstill. "What did you steal?"

"Oh, jewelry, or anything I could get hold of."

"Did you make any money from it?"

"Not much."

The nun was coming toward us, so I added hastily, "Look here, I've got four packets of cigarettes in my coat pocket; don't mistake them for jewelry."

I returned to our dormitory; Collette was sitting on her bed looking very glum. The Germans wanted to interrogate her husband, who had left France. They were holding her as hostage, hoping that she would write to ask him to return. She would probably be a prisoner for the duration, as she had no intention of writing.

I had never spoken to the Brisk Woman, who always had a

humorous twinkle. She smiled as she passed my bed. I remarked, "We have seen each other so often, madame, it is almost time we were introduced."

"My friend told me she had interpreted for you. She thinks your case went very well."

"I hope so, but we have heard no more; one never knows. . . . And your case?"

"Oh, I have been tried and sentenced to six months."

"Is it inquisitive to ask why?"

"For distributing communistic pamphlets."

"Oh, really! When did you do that?"

"I've been a communist now for some years, and part of my work is to distribute communistic papers in the streets."

"I suppose the Germans had your name on their lists when they came into Paris?"

"No, I don't think they had even heard of me. They read my pamphlets while I was distributing them and objected."

I looked at her in astonishment. "You don't mean to say you went on distributing your pamphlets in the streets after the German occupation?"

"Why not? It is my work."

"I can't say I altogether agree with your political views, but believe me, madame, I more than admire you."

The Directeur realized that the stools were impossible, and he told the nuns we could sit for some of the time on the wooden benches in the dining-room; at least they had backs and were slightly more comfortable. This suited me, as I slipped behind the curtains and lay on one of the beds in the infirmary. I couldn't face the soup, but I had asked Schiaparelli to call me when it came, as I did not want to be missed. The nuns, if they had looked, could have seen me through

the bars lying on the bed. I reckoned sooner or later they would notice, but at any rate I could sleep in comfort until they did. Carmen Morey, to my annoyance, came and joined me.

Darby, Louise, and Jeanne spent most of the time together. I was with them occasionally, but I never talked to any one for long; I was too bored to exert myself, although Jeanne was one of the most accomplished women I had met. She could speak eight or nine languages fluently; she was a talented musician, portrait-painter, and journalist, and could talk interestingly on any subject; she was unaffected and kind-hearted.

I was sauntering around the courtyard by myself when Collette joined me, and we strolled together. We discussed the eighty English hostages which rumor said were here, and wondered whether they were men or women, and if they were allowed to buy any extra food.

"*Je suis Française! Je suis Française!*" I looked around to see who was screaming. The Mouse had just finished an argument with the Directeur and threw herself on the grass plot in the center of the courtyard.

"I'd better go and see what is wrong."

"No, Bessy," advised Collette, "leave her for the moment until she has recovered. I am beginning to understand that it is best, since we live in such close quarters, to see nothing, to hear nothing, and to speak nothing. France should be ashamed of her prisons. I feel I have been sent here for a reason; after I am released I shall do my best to see that no such treatment exists."

I agreed with her.

We continued to stroll around for a while; then I spoke to

the Mouse. "Do come and look at the caterpillar Marie has found," I said.

I could hardly blame the Mouse for showing so little interest—caterpillars have never intrigued me—nevertheless, I dragged her toward Marie. It was an amazing caterpillar, very large and brilliant in color. We had a heated discussion, in which the Mouse took part, as to what kind of butterfly it would turn into.

Soup at three, a short *promenade* afterwards, our stools in the dormitory until bedtime. Darby and several others thought this was heaven in comparison with Cherche-Midi: from our windows we could see the tops of the trees in the courtyard, and there was grass outside. The peace and quiet of the nuns Darby thought was almost bliss after the tramping and shouting of soldiers. There were some who preferred the Cherche-Midi and others Fresnes. I was asked my opinion. To me it boiled down to a question of bugs; unless they were exterminated quickly here they would become as serious a menace as before, in which case give me the Cherche-Midi. The food there was better, one could smoke and buy little extras. I loathed never being able to get away for one second the day or night from a crowd of unhappy, nerve-strained women, who had no outlet or occupation. At Cherche-Midi the suffering was more individual. At Fresnes it was communal. We had no privacy whatsoever; the nuns watched us incessantly through the bars. There one could sleep the time away; here we had nothing but hard wooden benches to sit on all day. However, it would be better at Fresnes in the winter, as there was central heating; at Cherche-Midi there was no means whatsoever of heating the cells.

About seven we had a kind of unofficial supper. Some of

us had brought scraps of food from the Cherche-Midi; Collette gave me chocolate, the little Mouse darted over suddenly and presented me with some cheese she had saved up, Louise gave Darby and me a pot of English marmalade to share. These titbits helped to fill an aching void.

In the morning Zeta was still in great pain; she had not yet seen a doctor. But Carmen, to our great relief, was taken away to have her leg attended to, as her wound was becoming septic. It was the only time in my life I hoped a human being would suffer.

The afternoon was warm and sultry. I was sitting chewing some grass when I saw the brawny figure of the Kommandant of Cherche-Midi standing in the gateway. He called me over and said, "You are free." I did not take in the meaning of the words. He continued: Darby and I were to change into our uniform. . . . Although what he was saying became clearer to me, I could hardly believe my ears. His knowledge of English and French was slight, and I thought he might be trying to tell us that we were to be transferred. I rushed over to Louise: "Quickly—do come quickly. I want you to interpret for me!" She talked in German with the Kommandant.

"My dear, I am so glad," she said. "It is true, you are freed. Tell Darby, and hurry into your clothes; the Kommandant will take you back to Paris in his car."

I ran across the courtyard. "Darby!" I yelled. "We are free!" She stood stock still. "Oh, don't be a damn' fool. We are free!" I cried.

Darby did not believe me. She tore over to Louise, who was still talking to the Kommandant, to confirm it.

We rushed upstairs to our dormitory; we were both as near hysterics as we had ever been in our lives. It was true we were

free, but we could hardly take in what freedom meant. Did it mean home and England, or living in France for the duration of war? But these problems were too far ahead for us to consider seriously at the moment. We were free, free, free! It was all we could think about—we were free....

Schiaparelli and Collette followed us up and helped us to undress, while the nuns fetched our clothes from the floor above. Getting into our uniform in our hurry and excitement was difficult. I lost my flapjack; I searched, but it was nowhere to be found. Schiaparelli fetched a beautiful leather one from her suitcase. "Take this—it will do."

"But what about your face? Don't you want it?"

"No, I have another."

I hastily put it in my pocket without bothering to find out if this was true. Schiaparelli was telling us we could go to her flat—we could stay there, her clothes and everything there we could use as our own; the *concierge* would look after us. We thanked her and explained we already had an understanding that, should we be freed, we should go straight to Claire, a relative of one of the prisoners, who was living in a hotel in Paris.

Collette was gazing through the bars with tears in her eyes. It came as a shock to me that this was a clean break and I must now say good-by. It was difficult to find words.

"So you are off," Collette said. "Well, I'm glad.... Can you let me have your rouge? You can get some more in Paris."

I gave it to her, but except for banalities could think of nothing to say. I hurried from the room. "Look here, Darby, we simply can't cross the courtyard and say good-by to the rest—I can't face it. There must be another way out."

Darby agreed, but the nuns told us there was no other way. With a sinking feeling I walked across the yard; every one realized we were free. Grand'mère and her friends ran up to congratulate us, in the distance Marie smiled, the little Mouse unexpectedly threw her arms round my neck and kissed me on each cheek, and as I turned away her sad eyes followed me over to the Kommandant. The others were standing around in groups, and I was thankful I was not among them watching some one freed from Fresnes. Schiaparelli was still telling us should we change our minds to go to her flat. Louise said, "Now, where will you stay?" We told her the name of the hotel, which she interpreted to the Kommandant.

"Have you everything? Have you fetched your money?" some one asked.

We had completely forgotten about it. The nuns hurriedly took us over to the attendant's room where we had been told to leave it when we arrived. The attendant was sitting behind a desk and slowly counted out my five hundred and thirty-odd francs. We were in such a hurry to be gone that I nearly screamed with impatience while she slowly counted centimes and sous. I was in such a whirl that I hardly noticed the Directeur come in, or paid much attention to what he said. "My sincerest congratulations. I can not tell you how pleased I am that you are freed."

"I can't really believe it. Do you think it is true?"

"Yes, I know it is. I have seen your papers stamped free."

"Darby, for goodness' sake tell them to hurry." The attendant was counting her money as slowly as she had mine. I rushed past the Directeur and joined Louise and the Kommandant. In the brief pause which followed, I knew words

would be inadequate to say good-by to her. Neither by expression of face nor intonation of voice did Louise show any thoughts for herself or her future.

"Well, good-by, and good luck, Bessy."

"Good-by, Louise—thanks for the marmalade, and don't forget to eat what we've left."

Darby was ready; the Kommandant led us to the main gateways of the prison, which were guarded by sentries. With a dull thud the doors clanged behind us, and I hoped they would shut out from my mind for ever Fresnes and all the misery it contained.

We walked along the avenue of trees until we came to a streamlined car waiting outside another heavily barred section of the prison; we were told to put the things we were carrying into the car and go into the building. We asked for our passports and our large peasant's bundle; we were shown to a bench and told to wait. German soldiers were everywhere. When I asked one if I could smoke he told me it was not allowed. As he disappeared down the corridor I took out a packet of cigarettes. I smoked one, and then another. Darby said, "You're a fool; there will only be a row."

"I don't see what they can do. I can always pretend I didn't understand. I haven't smoked for so long. . . ."

I threw my cigarette out of the window when I saw the Kommandant coming along the passage. He led us through endless corridors with barred windows, and eventually we came to a doorway which a sentry unlocked. We went down flight after flight of narrow stone steps. We had been told we were freed, yet we were being led to the bowels of the earth—presumably to fetch our few miserable possessions. I wished they had been kept in a less formidable place, and as

I plunged after the Kommandant I longed to turn and rush back to the sunlit avenue of trees.

The farther down we went the stuffier the air became. The hard glare from the few electric lights which lit the stairway threw flickering shadows on the stone walls. I hesitated and instinctively tried to take in my bearings; any one who is shut away likes to remember his immediate surroundings.

The Kommandant noticed me pause, smiled, and said, "*Pas peur*—be not afraid." Pitch darkness brought us to a standstill; in reply to the Kommandant's shouts, we heard the hollow echoes of soldiers' voices. In a few seconds the lights were switched on and we made our way to a wide corridor, flanked on either side by steel doors. Each door had a small grille—cells. . . . Down here there was no possibility of windows; the air was putrid, and unless the light was switched on in the corridor the cells behind those grilled doors would be in complete darkness. Something inside me revolted. "It is inhuman to keep people here—it is sadistic cruelty which can do no good to any one. I do not care whether they are Germans, French, English, or Poles, or what nationality is kept behind those doors—it is wholly wicked and utterly wrong."

The Kommandant, though he could not have understood all my outburst, seemed to follow the gist and shrugged his shoulders. I do not think at that time those cells were used to entomb human beings. No sign came from them, and should there have been any one there I feel they would have made some sign on hearing our footsteps and voices.

A door was unbolted; in a small cell were our peasant's bundles and knapsacks. We were asked to see that nothing was missing. Neither of us cared; after a cursory glance we said everything was there. The soldiers carried them, and we

returned to the surface of the earth. Our passports and papers were handed to us, and if anything could have amused us I should have smiled when my diary was returned to me without comment.

The Kommandant sat between us at the back of the open car. The excitement of being freed, the obvious difficulties ahead, the pathos of those we had left behind, the shock of those cells in France in the twentieth century, left me numb. We sped toward Paris in silence.

As we reached the outskirts a gendarme ahead waved us on, apparently not noticing a car coming at full speed from a side turning. It was only the presence of mind of our driver which prevented a head-on collision. "French policemen very bad with traffic," the Kommandant remarked.

"They always have been," I replied.

We passed Le Bourget airdrome, which had been sprayed with bullets.

"Your honor, or ours?" I asked.

The Kommandant was non-committal.

We arrived at our hotel, which fortunately had a room. The Kommandant's parting words were, "Be not in the streets in your uniforms—English uniforms bad—be not arrested again. . . ."

We thanked him for fetching us from Fresnes, assured him we would discard our uniforms, and said good-by.

We were shown to our room, and in a few minutes Claire and her *fiancé*, Paul, were knocking on the door. Although we had heard a great deal about them both, we had never met.

Claire was French, young, *bien aimable*, though her life was far from easy. The first thing she did was to dash up to her room and fetch a bottle of gin and vermouth, which she in-

sisted on our keeping. For the next few hours we drank, smoked, and talked. Claire said she would do everything she possibly could for us, but she was afraid she could do little other than offer advice. She could not lend us money; she had practically none herself. She rigged us up in her clothes, and advised us as best she could. She and her *fiancé* were dining out with some friends and asked us to join them, but neither Darby nor I felt in the least sociable. They told us of a cheap restaurant near-by where one could have a fairly good dinner for thirteen francs.

The hotel we were staying in had no restaurant. Claire and Paul, who cooked their own food on a gas ring in her room, asked us to breakfast with them in the morning.

On the way to the restaurant I bought a bottle of cognac and rum. We were neither of us hungry, but were looking forward to coffee and cognac.

It may have been that we were so unused to *hors d'œuvre*, meat, vegetables, and sweets that whatever we had eaten we should have considered good, or it may have been that it actually was. We lingered and thoroughly enjoyed the food and liqueurs.

It was strange to be surrounded by so many happy people, chatting away and laughing. Had we been able to see any joke we might have laughed too. We both felt as though we were on the verge of recovering from a long illness only to be faced with another.

Fortunately we had no difference of opinion; it was home, James, and don't spare the horses, but from Paris, now a "German city," to England, we knew, was a long stride.

We doubted if the Germans would ever give us permission to leave Paris for unoccupied France, and from there to Eng-

land we did not imagine would be easy. If we could only get in touch with Huffer we should leave everything to him and no longer think. As far as we knew, he was still in Bordeaux, and the chances of making contact with him seemed almost nil.

We had swept aside all thoughts of staying in Paris. We had known for some time that there were always ways and means of leaving, but they required money and seemed fantastically unreal. Nevertheless ways were possible; but a false step and we were back in Fresnes, or the equivalent, this time for a legitimate reason—we would have violated German rules and regulations.

We would clutch at any straw. "But for God's sake, Darby, let's enjoy to-night."

In our own fashion we did, wandering along the streets, seeing people chatting outside their front doors or drinking in cafés; the bustle and hubbub of life was a joy for us to watch. I bought packet after packet of cigarettes and *chocolat* Menier.

We strolled back to our hotel, and could not understand why we were tired beyond words. We undid our peasant's bundle to get out our pajamas; they were so filthy that we decided to remain in our equally nauseating camiknickers.

Paris still had a black-out; we turned out the lights, threw open the windows, and Darby got into bed. After some time she said, "Do get into bed, Myers. It's getting awfully late."

I did so reluctantly; it had been fascinating to watch the world pass by from windows which had no bars.

9

"A German City"

We woke up and gazed about our room—neither of us had any inclination to get up. We turned in our beds for the sheer joy of being in a comfortable bed with clean white sheets. Darby occasionally muttered, "We should get up and have a bath."

I paid no attention—I was too comfortable to let thoughts of things which we should have to do to-day perturb me; I buried my face farther into the soft pillow and pulled the clothes around. The next time Darby mentioned a bath I asked her to have one, and, if possible, to talk less about it, adding that seldom had I known any one who could be so fiendishly chatty in the mornings. Silence reigned, till Darby announced that it was nine-thirty. "Didn't Claire say breakfast at nine o'clock?" I asked. Darby thought that she did. We were both out of bed in a flash. I flung on my greatcoat and Darby her mackintosh—we didn't bother to wash; the thought that we might have missed breakfast drove us at top speed to Claire's room.

We were half an hour late, but tea, toast, butter, and marmalade were awaiting us. Claire and Paul could hardly get a word in edgewise; we never stopped telling them how much we appreciated having breakfast after so long.

They wanted to know if the food at Fresnes was so very

bad. We explained that one could cut the soup out altogether from any food point of view, but if one liked drinking clear, colorless, warmish water one could do so twice a day, and one could eat as much dry bread as one liked. I should imagine it is possible to live on bread and water for a considerable time, but tea, toast, butter, and marmalade all at once—the joys of life are innumerable.

We arranged to meet Claire and Paul at six in the evening; they wished us a successful day. Claire had told us the only bathroom in the hotel was generally occupied. We tried it once, but decided it was no use waiting—the morning was already getting on. We cursed ourselves for not having washed our filthy camiknickers the night before. Claire's clothes fitted us fairly well, but our heavy brown service shoes rather spoilt our *tout ensemble.*

The proprietor of the hotel was helpful in trying to get the telephone numbers we wanted, but each time we drew a blank. In some cases the phone rang, but there was no reply; all our other numbers were unobtainable—presumably the telephone had been cut off.

Huffer's name was not in the telephone book. Again the proprietor did the best he could. He got a map of the Métro, and from the addresses we had given him worked out the quickest way by Métro.

It was quicker to go first to Darea, an old friend of mine, then on to Huffer's flat, which was near-by. The proprietor thought that the fact that we could not get in touch with our friends did not mean that they were not there. The telephone, he told us, was very unreliable these days.

He asked us to fill in the hotel registration forms before we

left. I was busy filling in mine when Darby exclaimed, "Where shall we say we have come from?"

"The Cherche-Midi, or Fresnes, or both."

"We can't possibly put that."

"Why not?" As Darby seemed most sensitive about our prison records, I suggested Soissons. Darby, who is accurate by nature, objected to writing Soissons, as it was not true.

"My dear, I don't care two hoots what we put, but let's write something—the morning's half gone already."

Darby decided to ask the proprietor to fill in that part of the forms, and he whisked them away. I never found out what he wrote; I heard no more about them.

The boulevards looked as beautiful as ever; we arrived at the Étoile, which was near to Darea's flat. The *concierge* said she had left on the 12th of June: she had given an address for her letters to be forwarded, but they had been returned. Like many who had left Paris in that ghastly rush, there was no further news of her. I left a note in case she should return.

We walked toward Huffer's flat. Though we had little hopes of finding him there, we were not unduly depressed; we still had three more friends whom we hoped we might find. A few minutes' walk brought us to the Avenue Henri Martin. I suggested sitting on one of the benches—I felt I must smoke; Darby readily agreed.

"You know, Myers, we've done absolutely nothing to-day, but I feel quite tired—do you?"

I thought the matter over and decided that I did.

Darby said, "Did you ever notice how slowly we all took the stairs after *promenade* the last weeks in the Cherche-Midi?"

"No, I can't say I noticed."

"Oh, I did; it always struck me."

We wandered on to Huffer's flat. Darby had been there before, when Huffer had given a dinner party for the Château de Blois unit the night before they left for the front. We inquired of the *concierge* whether he was in.

"*Il est sorti,*" she replied.

She had said "*sorti,*" not "*parti*"; it seemed too good to be true. "*Quand reviendra-t-il?*"

She didn't know, but told us his valet was upstairs in the flat; we could call to him from the courtyard. We followed her there almost dazed; could it be as simple as this? We knew if we could only find him he would be delighted to see us, and we never questioned that he would do his utmost for us. Once he set his mind on doing a job, he saw it through. That Herman Huffer, Jr., was to spend the next few days as a modern Scarlet Pimpernel; that he was to risk his personal liberty and give us *carte blanche* with his time and money—all this, I regret to say, we took as a matter of course at the time. We often said, "Well, thank goodness we have Huffer to help us," but we never fully appreciated how much he had risked for us until weeks afterwards, when we were hacking our way along the South of France. It was then, when we were sometimes in the depths of despair, that we realized we should not have got as far as we had, or reached England during the war, had not Herman Huffer made it possible that we should not lack money in the event of any emergency, and, regardless of the consequences to himself, set us on the path home.

In response to the shrill cries of the *concierge*, Pierre, Huffer's valet, put his head out of the window; he recognized

Darby at once. Further explanations were unnecessary; he was in the courtyard in a second. The words poured forth. Monsieur Huffer had just gone out, Monsieur would be *désolé* to have missed us. Monsieur had been so worried. He would be back by five-thirty. He himself just could not tell us how upset he had been when he heard that two of Monsieur's *conductrices anglaises* were *prisonnières....*

"Could we go upstairs and leave a message for Monsieur Huffer?" The flat, we were told, was entirely at our disposal.

We wrote a brief note saying we should be back at five-thirty.

Pierre was very concerned about us. Where had we been all this time? When we mentioned the Cherche-Midi we impressed him. A friend of his, a soldier, had been imprisoned there for a military offence; he had been allowed to see him, "*mais cette prison, c'est formidable; pour les soldats on peut comprendre, mais jamais pour les femmes.*"

There it was, we told him. We had spent nearly a month there, and in solitary confinement, except for the bugs.

That amazed him more than ever. "*Jamais de la vie, tut, tut. Oh, la la!*" He said his friend and the soldiers generally had never been kept in solitary confinement; they had spent much of their time in their cells, but they always had their meals in the dining-room, where they had been allowed to spend many hours. "*Comme vous avez souffert!*"

It was the first time we had had sympathy oozed at us. Claire and Paul could not have been nicer, but we had been so busy exchanging views and making plans that there had been no time for sympathy other than a complete understanding of each other's difficulties. Now that sympathy was being

poured upon us we readily accepted; it was true enough we had had a pretty rough time....

Pierre asked if he could lend us some money. We thanked him and explained we had ample until we met Monsieur Huffer.

We floated along the Avenue Henri Martin with soaring spirits. Lunch now was the chief topic of conversation; to spend five hundred francs on lunch seemed possible, but rather extravagant. I thought it would be fitting but expensive to lunch at the Pavillon Royal; I was going through a long list of the possible things we might eat, when I was interrupted by a piercing scream from Darby: "Huffer! Mr. Huffer!"

A Château de Blois ambulance flashed by, a screeching of brakes, Nigger barking excitedly, Darby and I running toward Huffer's amazed face: "God dammit, God dammit, where have you two been?"

"In the Cherche-Midi."

"Why didn't you communicate with me? I've been back some weeks." To give a coherent account in the middle of the road of the whys and wherefores since we had last met was difficult. Huffer wanted to know when we were released.

"Last night."

"Why didn't you phone me?"

"You are not in the telephone book."

"Why didn't you get on to my sister? You know her name."

This stumped us; we had not thought about it. Huffer considered we should have done; then instead of his having to dash off to lunch now we could have got together and talked. As it was, he could not be back until five-thirty.

"Have you got any money?"

"Yes, thanks, heaps till this evening."

"Well, you had better take this," Huffer said, handing us a thousand-franc note. "There are sure to be odds and ends you want to buy—never yet met a woman who didn't. And where are you off to now?" We told him we were just going to lunch. Huffer would not hear of it; his cook could easily fix up something, and in any case he thought the occasion demanded a drink. We returned to his flat, which was large and beautifully furnished. From the Cherche-Midi and Fresnes to a luxurious block of flats was a far cry.

In a few minutes we had given Huffer a brief picture of our wanderings, and he gave us an account of his. Kruger, Otto, Lloyd Bennet had got through safely with Drs. le Maire and le Nègre and had joined Huffer, Heard, and Angus at Saint-Valérien on the 14th of June. They realized France was collapsing, and Huffer decided the best thing was to make for Bordeaux immediately. Angus and Heard took three wounded R.A.F. men on to Orleans: Huffer had not heard from them since. They might, he thought, have been taken prisoners, or contacted an R.A.F. base and got home. Kruger, Otto, Lloyd Bennet, and he, after a tremendous fight on packed roads, made Bordeaux, where they met the Hadfield Spears and other units of the M.T.C. who had arrived there safely. They sailed for England, and Huffer returned to Paris.

"*Déjeuner est servi,*" Pierre announced. Huffer had to go. We started lunch.

It was some time since we had said that nothing would ever surprise us again; we were not actually surprised, but the meal seemed strange and unreal. There were so many courses excellently cooked and perfectly served, our surroundings were redolent of comfort, the cut glass sparkled in the sunlight, the

wines were delicious—this after bread and water at Fresnes; it was too big a gap to jump in less than twenty-four hours. We said, "Well, well, it's a great life if you don't weaken," as we gobbled down a second and sometimes a third helping of each course; the climax came when Pierre brought in a tart *au rhum* when we imagined we had eaten to our capacities. We were reduced almost to tears, until we realized that we could take a deep breath and large helpings; little of the tart was left. A clock chimed two.

"You know, Darby, I think the hours of ten and three will always make me shudder. In one hour they will be tackling that soup and bread, and some of them will be tackling that soup and bread for years to come."

Darby said, "It's simply useless thinking about it."

But the mere glancing thought had made my appetite return. I got through some cheese, butter, and biscuits with ease. Darby did the same. We discussed how best to spend our money. Our resources would not buy both of us dresses, stockings, and shoes. Darby said having her hair washed was the chief thing as far as she was concerned. Mine was a dress. I asked Pierre if the Galeries Lafayette were about the cheapest and best place to try, and could I buy a dress for three or four hundred francs? He thought I might be able to, and offered to lend us a thousand francs. We thanked him, but refused.

We returned to the study and sat in the window-seat. Being able to look out of unbarred windows remained one of my greatest joys for some time. Pierre came in with coffee and liqueurs; a thousand-franc note was discreetly placed under the coffee-pot. As soon as he left the room we burst out laughing. It was almost too much; the thousand francs, the

coffee and liqueurs were the finishing touch to a perfect lunch.

Darby decided to go to the Galeries Lafayette with me. The Métro was the only form of transport; everywhere, to left, to right, behind, and in front of one, were German soldiers; they were neither loud nor noisy, but *en masse* they surrounded one.

On arrival at the Galeries Lafayette I explained to the *vendeuse* that I wanted what most women required—an extremely nice dress for very little money. She was overwhelmed to hear my English accent. "You are English, mademoiselle, surely you are English?" Nothing could give her greater pleasure than to serve "*une Anglaise . . . après ces sales Boches.*"

"Oh, do be careful what you say. If a German overhears you can get two years' imprisonment."

"It's not possible!"

"It is not only possible, but true. I have just come from the Cherche-Midi, where two Frenchwomen were sentenced for that alone."

The *vendeuse* gaped at me—why had I been there, was one of the many questions she rattled off. I gave her a brief summary. I was whisked off to a fitting-room, she brought me her best models, told me to choose and not to worry about the price; the buyer would soon be along, something could be arranged.

Quite a lot was arranged. The dress I chose was 928 francs; the buyer and several other *vendeuses* who had accumulated in the fitting-room asked me anxiously if I could pay 650 francs. I readily agreed and felt rather mean; I had only to wait until I saw Huffer that night and I could pay the full price. They

threw in a heavy *crêpe de Chine* slip and all alterations for nothing.

Had I powder, lipstick, scent? An affirmative did not satisfy them; I showed them what I had. "Oh, but you can never tell, you will require more than that." They insisted upon my taking what they offered. Had I sufficient money to see me through the next few days? was their next question. I assured them that I had. Was I absolutely certain; they could so easily have a quick whip around their department and raise at least a thousand francs.

There was little I could say to thank them adequately, and again assured them it was not necessary, but names and addresses were hastily written down. "Mademoiselle, one can never be too sure in this life—and will you go back to England?"

"Yes, that's my intention."

"But is it possible these days?"

"I don't know yet, but I shall try."

"*Vive l'Angleterre!*"

"*Vive la France!*"

I left them with quite a lump in my throat. I had arranged to return in an hour's time, when the alterations would be finished. Meanwhile my quest was for shoes. Darby had not bought a dress; she had dashed off to have her hair done, and we were to meet at Huffer's flat.

I wandered up and down the adjoining streets and boulevards which form the busiest shopping center of Paris. The difficulty was not that the shops lacked any display of shoes; they were all full of them, and customers. What they lacked was variety of sizes. I take a small size which is in most frequent demand in Paris, but in other than evening shoes my

size seemed to have disappeared. I wandered from shop to shop.

Occasionally while waiting to be served I watched with amused interest a German officer buying Paris shoes for his wife: she infinitely patient, he politeness itself, the *vendeuse* discreet and obliging. The difficulty was that the average French shoe was never made for the feet of the German *Hausfrau.*

There were not many German women in Paris while I was there (August 9-14), but the ones I did see were dressed in reasonably good materials. They all looked in glowing health and well nourished to the point of fatness. They might have bought their clothes in Paris during the few weeks they had been there, but they certainly could not have put on all that weight in such short time; presumably they were the wives and friends of Nazi officials who lived on what fat there was in Germany.

I became hot and exhausted and gave up my quest for shoes. I chose a seat on the pavement of a near-by café, as I liked to watch what was going on.

Paris was quite 50 per cent fuller of civilians than on that wretched day Darby and I had been brought there from Laon by the German officer in charge of us. All the cafés were now reasonably full with a mixture chiefly French. Despite the innumerable German soldiers, the majority of the people walking in the streets were French, but all the traffic was utterly German, and as I watched the streamlined cars stop and draw up at the cafés, and saw German officers—some with their womenfolk—step out, I thought how galling, how very galling, for the French. Thank goodness this was Paris, not London.

The theaters had not yet reopened. There were a few cinemas showing French films, but the majority were plastered all over with German notices, and films were being shown for the German soldiers.

Well, this was Paris, not London. . . .

Time was slipping by. I returned to the Galeries Lafayette and again was impressed by the packed shops. German soldiers were everywhere buying what they could. It amused me to see them buying scent, powder, rouge, lipstick, to send back to Germany; they could not object to make-up so much after all.

Huffer's cook later told me that when the Germans first came to Paris they went into all the dairies and ate pounds of butter raw. Huffer also told me they were buying up all available stocks of goods. His shirt-maker, for example, had sold out all his old and present stocks, and, much to Huffer's annoyance, was unable to make him any more. Silk stockings were practically unobtainable; they had all been sold to the Germans who paid in marks. This mark had an entirely fictitious value, but nevertheless one day the Bank of France would have to meet it in francs. Complete bankruptcy was not far off for occupied France.

Henri at Soissons had said that the Germans would go gently with the French at first, and up to a point I could see it was true. There was no boastfulness in their demeanor, one could not point a finger at any objectionable public behavior; if they wanted to inquire their way about they did so politely. If they ordered in restaurants or cafés they did so politely. They bought in shops politely. They attempted little looting, except from the Jews; even that was done discreetly. Parisians had to be indoors by 11 P.M., but while I was there the time

was changed to ten-thirty. After that hour the perpetual rumblings of lorries could be heard. All Jewish property was removed under cover of darkness. If an occasional masterpiece was missing from a Frenchman's home it was just too bad—had he been there it would not have happened; when he returned who could say definitely who had stolen it?

The French, who were unaware of or shut their eyes to the horrors of the German political system, said, "They are so correct, one can not say otherwise—they are correct." It did not astonish me at all; the German Army had its orders and obeyed them. After all, human nature is such that it is difficult to work it up to a pitch when it is possible to hate all nations at the same time. They had been told to go gently with the French, but even so they could hate as much as they pleased the Poles, the Czechs, and all other races whom they considered inferior. They could hate England as much as they liked. I knew they did not despise her; they feared her more than they cared to admit. England stood between them and world "living-space."

When I arrived back at the Galeries Lafayette the *vendeuse* and I missed having hysterics by a narrow margin only. She had just finished serving a German woman accompanied by an officer bedecked with ribbons. As they were leaving, quite suddenly and unexpectedly his arm shot up in the air. "*Heil, Hitler!*" The *vendeuse* caught my eye. This amongst the model dresses was too much for me—it was tragedy, pathos, anything one liked, but at the time I could see only the sheer idiocy of it. I collapsed on a near-by sofa shaking with laughter. The *vendeuse* kept an expressionless face until the Germans had turned their backs. Then she joined me. "I am

glad that you laugh, mademoiselle; otherwise I should have cried."

Huffer, a connoisseur of clothes, thought my dress a great success; I had been unable to buy any stockings, and I thought my legs, such as they were, were better bare with a Paris model than khaki stockings. Huffer was of two minds; my legs really shocked him.

Our dinner at his flat was as good as the lunch. I was astonished at the amount Darby and I could eat. We told Huffer word for word what had happened, and we all wondered who the snake in the grass at Soissons could be.

Huffer thought that apart from my bites I looked exactly the same as when he last saw me, but that Darby looked the worse for wear. I was so used to seeing her that I had not realized how much she had changed. Darby said that however grim she might look, it could not compare with me the first week in the Cherche-Midi.

"Did I really look so awful?"

"Simply appalling, my dear, but afterwards you looked much better."

"Well, I felt better. After the first week nothing worried me."

We put our heads together and plotted and planned. We knew that the difficulties facing us in getting from occupied to unoccupied France would be as hazardous as trying to get from one country to another in wartime without a passport. One could obtain from the Kommandantur a traveling permit, but in our case it was thought that permission would have to be granted from Berlin, which would mean months of delay. At the moment the Germans were not interning

Englishwomen in France, but from day to day one could not tell how the political situation might develop.

Huffer said, "I will get the girls to Vichy myself."

It was getting on for curfew time—eleven o'clock. Huffer saw us back to our hotel. We promised to meet him at his bank early the following morning. We were very tired, and as I crawled into bed I ate the three remaining bars of *chocolat* Menier, Darby thought that after our colossal lunch and dinner I was bound to be sick, but I didn't think so. "Darby, it's a curious thing," I said, "but now I can't stop eating. Unless I feel so stuffed that I simply *can't* put any more down, I don't feel that I've had nearly enough to eat."

"I didn't suffer from hunger nearly as much as you did. Perhaps it's because you had to give up smoking?"

"Maybe."

I slept, but Darby spent most of the night awake suffering violent pains of indigestion.

Our few days in Paris were one long exciting rush. We saw little of Claire and Paul. Claire had to leave Paris, and it was one of my regrets that we left before she returned. Paul always managed to provide breakfast for us.

The Banzets, friends of Huffer who lived in the same block, were anxious to meet us. It was Sunday, and Huffer suggested we should go up to their flat. We met Monsieur and Madame Banzet, two daughters, two boys, and the grandmother. They were a delightful family. They had left for Bordeaux before the German occupation, and they gave us a graphic description of their return.

People who had fled on the nights of the 12th, 13th, and 14th of June had mostly become jammed on the roads between the two armies, and had suffered accordingly. Those

who were not caught were lucky if their petrol was sufficient and the roads clear enough for them to make their way. Thousands were killed in car accidents. People in their wild dash for escape had innumerable crashes; often wrecked cars piled on the roads to such an extent as to make them impassable. The hale and hearty walked on to the next village, which was generally full to capacity, with little food to spare. They would then walk on and hope for the best. Many camped in the fields with only such protection from the elements as they had brought with them. Some had bedding and blankets, others had not. None had food for more than a few days. The wrecked cars and peasant carts piled up behind them; a few near enough to Paris walked back, but many of the infirm, the aged, and the young died of exhaustion and starvation in the fields.

The Banzets told us that on their return journey from Bordeaux to Tours and from Tours to Paris it was impossible to count the number of wrecked cars now dragged off the roads and piled up in the ditches—one long graveyard of twisted metal. All the roads leading from Paris were the same.

Madame Banzet's clothes fitted Darby; I was roughly the daughters' size. It was not so much the dresses, underclothes, shoes, stockings, bags, and gloves which they gave us as the manner in which they gave them that will always be a pleasure for me to recall.

It was nearly teatime before we had finished; we promised to have coffee with them after dinner, and went down to Huffer's flat dressed in their clothes.

We strolled to the Sports Club in the Bois de Boulogne. Huffer was annoyed to find that the Germans controlled it, and members were not permitted to bring in guests over the

week-end. He had played tennis there several times recently, and had been infuriated at seeing so many young Frenchmen lounging about sun-bathing while the harvest was lying idle in the fields. We had tea at the Pavillon Royal. It had changed considerably; it was no longer a smart restaurant, but a *Biergarten* under the trees. It was not even frequented by German officers. German soldiers with their wives and sweethearts sat drinking beer—it depressed us so that we soon left. As we reached the outskirts of the Bois two shots rang out; during the evening we heard two more being fired. We learned later that the first shots had been fired by a Frenchman at some German soldiers. The Bois de Boulogne was closed from that day to the public. The second shots, rumor said, were caused by two German naval officers committing suicide.

We had a delightful evening with the Banzets. They asked me what it felt like to be free. I explained that from the depths of misery to such heights of luxury was so big a jump that it was difficult to keep one's thoughts balanced.

"We can not imagine what solitary confinement can be like," the Banzets said.

"I don't think any one can. You might think it's like this, that, or the other, but I don't think any one can know what it is like until he experiences it. I don't think it would be quite so bad if one at least knew how long one's sentence was for."

The next day the two Mesdemoiselles from Darby's old school came to have tea at Huffer's flat. I was late, as I at last had had my hair done. Huffer had recommended a *coiffeur*, and I had made an appointment. I apologized for the filth of my hair, explaining that I had had no opportunity to wash it. The *coiffeur* waved my apologies aside. He said

that until two weeks ago he had been a prisoner of war and had escaped from a town where the water had been entirely cut off.

"Really? Which town was that?"

"Soissons."

I jerked my head up, getting the soap into my eyes. "Were you at the barracks, the camp, or the *hôpital militaire*?"

"I was at the barracks, but I had to work for the Germans their side of the *hôpital militaire*."

"Then you must know Henri de C., the official interpreter?"

"Of course. Your face, mademoiselle, is familiar."

"I was there, too."

He could tell me nothing of Henri except that three weeks ago he was still there.

Darby's Mesdemoiselles, who were dear old ladies nearing eighty, had a strange tale to tell; they had received Darby's postcard from Soissons, and went to the American Embassy to inquire the best way to forward her message to her mother. They had rewritten the message on a postcard and addressed it to England, with a short note from themselves. As they were approaching the Embassy they saw a Château de Blois ambulance draw up and a tall man descend. They rather timidly approached him; they knew Darby had been attached to that ambulance corps. It appears that it was Huffer. He said it was infuriating meeting those two old dears and getting so far and no farther, for Darby had been told at Soissons not to put her address on the card. The old ladies made us laugh; they had sent the postcard off, and it had gone *via* Cologne. About a month later two German officers called on them with the postcard they had sent. They were questioned for an hour

and showed the Germans the original card which Darby had sent, but of course could tell them nothing more.

They lived on the outskirts of Paris, and had decided they were too old to try to evacuate.

During the afternoon of the 13th of June bells had been rung in the streets, and every one was told the bridges would be blown up—"*Sauve qui peut.*"

"Were the bridges blown up?" I asked.

"Yes, but that is what was so absurd. What was the point of blowing up bridges the south side of Paris when the Germans would be entering from the northwest and east? It simply meant that after they were blown up one could not leave Paris."

"What did you do?"

"As every one was told to leave, we packed a few things into a suitcase and took the next train into Paris, but it was impossible to get anywhere near a railway station; all the streets leading to them were blocked by crowds of people. We saw it was hopeless. We were lucky, though, for some relatives who live in Paris had made no attempt to leave. They had a spare room and put us up. Everything was very quiet when the Germans entered; people did not leave their houses, but gradually they ventured into the streets, and after a week we returned to our home."

"What a tragedy those packed roads must have been," I remarked.

"They must have been appalling, mademoiselle. The family who had a flat underneath my relatives left just before the Germans entered. A few days afterwards a German soldier knocked at our door to make inquiries about them; they had gone in a hurry and had left no address. My relatives could tell

him nothing. It was very sad, for he had in his arms their six-months-old son whose jaw was broken and one arm had been amputated. The Germans had found him on the road just outside Paris with his name and address tied around his neck. The baby was taken to hospital."

"Did you ever hear what happened to the rest of the family?"

"No, they have not returned, and my relatives know nothing more, but they visit the baby in hospital; he is progressing."

We saw the dear old ladies to the Métro, and dashed off to do our shopping. Lists had been posted up in Paris giving the visiting days for each prison. On the next visiting day at Fresnes Paul had promised to take some things there for us. We had already bought some fruit, but wanted something more substantial. Tinned food was practically unobtainable, and there were long queues outside every food shop. However, we were very lucky, for in the end we managed to get three tins of canned fish and twenty jars of meat paste. A jar of paste is only a jar of paste, but we knew that with careful management it could give immense pleasure for a week.

As we were very late for dinner, we expected Huffer to be rather annoyed—he had several people dining with him. He made every excuse for us when we did arrive; Darby and I suspected we had become the Blue-eyed Girls. Huffer always introduced us with great *élan* as "My two ambulance drivers from the Cherche-Midi."

The Duchesse de Pozzo di Borgo was among his guests, and Huffer, who, although he had a sense of humor, apparently saw nothing funny in his remark, said, "Myers, show the Duchesse your legs."

The Duchesse was a charming and most interesting woman. She told me her husband had been imprisoned for his political views. I gathered that with Colonel de la Rocque he had been one of the founders of the Croix de Feu.

Huffer saw us back to our hotel. Darby was still suffering from indigestion. We had both eaten so much that I was wondering when my turn would come.

"Darby, have you noticed that Huffer seems to have the most enormous appetite, too?

"No, I haven't, but now I come to think of it of course he has."

"You don't think by any chance he's being the perfect host?"

"I shouldn't be surprised."

"Dear old Huffer. I wonder if he's got indigestion, too."

Darby sat on her bed staring blankly in front of her.

"Darby, for heaven's sake get out of that habit of biting your nails and gazing at nothing."

Darby came to. She told me she never bit her nails, only her cuticles, and she never realized when she was doing it.

The next two days passed so quickly that we hardly realized they had gone. It was the 14th of August. Our plans were set; they were simple in the extreme; they would either work or they would not.

We set off. Everything was according to plan. The sun was sinking as we arrived in Vichy.

10

Vichy

THE FRENCH FLAG flying over the Hôtel Parc Majestic gave the impression that France still lived; but I felt more in sympathy with the ragged poilus of Soissons than with the soldiers thronging the streets of Vichy. The clicking spurs, the polished boots, the brilliant uniforms, left me with the feeling that within the shadow of the swastika I was watching the last act of a musical comedy which satire had twisted into tragedy.

The Hôtel Parc Majestic, where Maréchal Pétain and his *entourage* were staying, was the center of social and political life. Huffer went there to book our rooms; he returned in a few moments, accompanied by an old friend, Captain Escudier, A.D.C. to Général Douminck, Major-Général (Quartermaster-General) of France. Vichy was full to overflowing; there was not a room to be had in the town, but Captain Escudier thought he might be able to arrange with the Général for us to stay at the Hôtel Mazarin, which had been requisitioned for sixteen officers who were helping with the reconstruction of France.

We walked around to the hotel. The shops, as in Paris, lacked no display of goods, and prices were normal; but it was glaringly obvious that when the present stocks gave out there would be no means of replacing them. Had the factories in the north been working they would have found it almost im-

possible to transport their goods to the unoccupied zone, and what extra produce the unoccupied zone might have could not be sent north. The German-made frontier was a steel band, and neither zone had much information about the other. There were no means of communication by telephone, telegraph, or letter. Traveling between the zones was legally possible, but extremely difficult. One first had to prove a vitally necessary reason, and only after every detail had been corroborated, endless documents filled in, and after waiting for weeks was there any hope of getting the official pass, which was seldom granted.

We felt jubilant. We had arrived in Vichy without a hitch; we saw no difficulties ahead—we seemed all but home.

It was strange walking along the well-lit streets after the accustomed black-out; it was even stranger when Captain Escudier led us up to three comfortable rooms, and we were able to open the windows wide, with the lights on and the curtains not drawn. Général Douminck had not only given permission for us to have the rooms, but had invited us to breakfast with them in their mess during our stay.

Captain Escudier, who arranged the food for the officers' mess, fetched us for breakfast; he told us that at the moment there was plenty of food in France, but he feared there would be a great shortage during the winter. He showed us the luncheon menu—roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, etc.—which Churchill had had near Tours when he came over to France on the 11th of June.

We were amazed to learn that we could wire London, and cabled to our families; with luck we might receive a reply within a day, and we visualized the excitement there would be at home on hearing we were in Vichy and on our way back.

Huffer in his delight looked quite boyish when I showed him the reply I received from my father later on in the day.

We had an appointment with Bob Murphy, the *chargé d'affaires* of the American Embassy, and we arranged to meet Captain Escudier at the Cintra before lunch.

At the American Embassy Bob Murphy introduced us to Dick Warner, who later took over his work; they gave us all the information they could. The first thing to be done was to get an exit permit—one could not leave France without. We went to the Préfecture with a personal letter of introduction to the Chef du Bureau de la Circulation, Vichy. He explained that before he could make out an order for an exit permit we must tell him from which town we wanted to leave, as the name of the town had to be specified on the exit permit, and one could leave France only from the town stated. We asked to leave from Cerbère, and the Chef du Bureau told us that when the order was sanctioned we must take it to the Préfet of Marseille, who from these orders would make out exit permits for the towns along the south coast. When our exit permit had been issued in Marseille, it would be valid for eight days from the date of issue. The Chef du Bureau hoped to get the order for our exit permit sanctioned within a few days.

Waiting for us at our hotel we found Dan Brigham, the correspondent for the *New York Times*. He had 'phoned Huffer for an interview. We readily answered the questions he asked, and were thrilled when he said he would cable our story to New York at six that evening; the *New York Times* would recable it to *The Times* of London, and our story would be in both papers by the morning. We thought how pleased our parents would be to know details of us.

It was late in the afternoon, when Darby and I were having

tea at the Cintra, that, knowing nothing of journalism, I was wondering what sort of caption Dan Brigham would use for our story. "Germans Beat Up Their Own Soldiers." "Imprisonment without Trial." "Girls Escape Nazi Clutches." "Two Ex-Prisoners Escape from Paris." "English Girls Escape Paris for London."

"Darby, we must find Dan Brigham."

"Whatever for?"

"If he writes that story sensationally and quotes us as saying the Germans treat their prisoners brutally our chances of getting home are nil."

It was half-past five; we had half an hour in which to stop the cable. We dashed madly along the street and ran into Huffer, coming out of the American Embassy.

"God dammit, God dammit, what's all this rush for?"

"If Dan Brigham wires anything we've said about the Germans we're sunk. We've got to get hold of him before he sends his cable."

Huffer was rather annoyed. "I'd never have thought you'd do anything so silly."

"Well, we're not used to giving interviews," I said; "for heaven's sake don't let's waste time."

There were no taxis in Vichy; if one was lucky one could get a carriage, but there was none in sight. Vichy, which can be grueling in the summer, was excelling herself; perspiration fell from us in streams as we rushed into this office and that, trying to find Dan Brigham. Huffer suggested he might be in the bar at the Majestic. He was not there, and even the clinking of the iced drinks did not tempt us to pause. I said, "If we can't find him the only thing to do is to cable the *New York Times* and ask them to cancel the story about us."

Huffer thought that probably they would not take our cable as authentic. Both he and Darby said that not only had they never seen me in a flat spin, but they never imagined I could get into such a one.

"Well, it's so silly. If one is taken prisoner it's just bad luck, but to ask to have the gates of prisons opened for one is idiotic."

Huffer repeated, "I can't think how you could have been so stupid."

We had five minutes left. I suggested the post-office: we tore toward it. Dan Brigham passed us in his car: "Hello, what's the hurry?"

Huffer explained. Dan Brigham gave me some typewritten sheets. "I was just going to cable this to New York, but I'm glad to be rid of it; trying to tone down red-hot news into a milk-and-water story has given me a headache the whole afternoon. My advice to you both is not to talk too much before you get to England."

I sighed with relief.

We were dining that evening with the Brazilian Ambassador Señor Souza Dantos, and his wife. It was getting late, and Dan said he would take me to a *coiffeur* in Vichy.

"Have you any ideas in the *coiffeur* line?" Dan asked.

"None at all."

"Well the best one I know is the bar at the Majestic."

The bar was full; several of Dan's friends joined us. The stories were amusing; prison seemed far away. A rather exciting tale was being told in a hushed whisper.

"Why all this secrecy?" I asked.

"Vichy is full of Gestapo agents," Dan said.

"Even in here?"

He pointed out three.

"Are they in the hotel as well?"

"I'll be able to show you five or six this evening."

On the way back to the Hôtel Mazarin Dan said, "You ought to keep an eye on your friend; she looks as though she may have a nervous collapse. If I were you I'd see that she goes to bed fairly early and doesn't rush around too much."

Darby had already changed; she looked very tired. The trouble was that she did not sleep well.

Huffer had left strict instructions that we were to be at the Parc Majestic by eight. We arrived as the clock struck the hour and were the first guests. Madame Souza Dantos said she was sorry there would be few young men in the party. In an attempt to be tactful I replied, "Oh, please don't worry about that, your Excellency. Darby and I have done nothing but live with men for the past two months."

Her Excellency smiled, "Do your parents know that?" She waved aside my attempt at explanation.

The evening, like the rest of the time we spent lunching and dining with Huffer's friends, passed all too quickly. The restaurant was packed, the food was plentiful and good. Laval, wearing as usual a white tie, had his pet corner table. Later in the evening Dan pointed out several Gestapo agents. One in particular was awe-inspiring; his carnivorous face so marked him out from his fellow-men that I should have thought he was far too obviously an evil type to have gained any one's confidence.

I soon got to know the Gestapo agents by sight—there were always several sitting around in the lounge; and when a few evenings later Señor and Señora Souza Dantos invited the

Swiss Ambassador and his wife to dinner I hoped the carnivorous creature would be impressed at seeing me in such ambassadorial circles.

There was no fixed rule for breakfast at the Mazarin; sometimes we had it early alone with Captain Escudier, at other times the mess was crowded. We usually breakfasted before eight, and, as I am never chatty in the early morning beyond the few polite remarks which the occasion might demand, I generally breakfasted in silence. I muttered, "*Merci bien, monsieur,*" when some one passed me a *croissant.*

As we left the mess Huffer said, "Of course, Myers, you would call the Quartermaster-General of France 'monsieur.' "

"What should I have called him?"

"Didn't you learn anything at school?"

"Nothing that I can remember. What's the matter with 'monsieur'? I thought that covered everything."

Apparently it did not cover the Quartermaster-General of France. Huffer said, "Since you've been working under Général Morrison, you should address the Quartermaster-General as '*mon Général.*' "

"As he has asked us all to lunch, I don't think 'monsieur' can have upset him very much."

The lunch turned out to be a pleasantly informal affair. Général François Kergoat was interested to know how we had been taken prisoners. We were constantly being asked to tell our experiences, and we had found that men, especially soldiers, roared with laughter when they heard we had been imprisoned in the Cherche-Midi. Général Kergoat was no exception; when we mentioned the prison a broad grim spread over his face.

"Why is it so funny, *mon Général?*" I asked.

"Pardon my smiling at your misfortune, but to a soldier it seems fantastic that you should have been imprisoned in the Cherche-Midi."

Later on in the day I found a letter awaiting me in our hotel from Mrs. James Corrigan. We had lunched with her several times, but as so often happens at large luncheon parties I had had little opportunity of speaking for long with my hostess. I had generally sat next to the Comte de Frijs, who had been helping Mrs. Corrigan.

I had heard quite a lot about the marvelous work she had done in Paris during September, 1939. She had arranged cinema shows at the front, and once took her ambulance to the front under shell-fire. She was godmother to the 110th Regiment and an honorary corporal in the 27th Tanks, and had herself practically kept both these regiments in comforts. She was now visiting the various camps and supplying the fundamental needs which the prisoners of war lacked.

I might have left Vichy knowing her only casually had she not happened to pass through the lounge of the Parc Majestic and joined Darby and me while we were having tea. She told us that at eighteen she had worked very hard and had had many responsibilities. One of her chief interests was the study of religious philosophy. She had to rush away, as with most of her day spent working for the Red Cross, she had very little time to spare.

We were dining with the Comtesse de Villeneuve Bargemont. I showed Darby a letter which I had just received from Mrs. Corrigan: it was chiefly quotations.

One of them, "Success begins first in the mind," became our motto during our ups and downs on the Côte d'Azur:

I think it helped to prevent us from sitting in Cannes for, possibly, the duration of the war.

The Comtesse de Villeneuve Bargemont was a *grande dame* of France. She had a cream-and-peach complexion, bright blue eyes, a perfect figure, and lovely features crowned by beautifully dressed white hair. She was perfectly delightful, and looked so like a Dresden figure that it almost surprised me when she spoke or moved. The Comtesse had given a tea party at the Sports Club, when we had met Madame Wellington Koo.

Before Madame Wellington Koo left she had most sincerely wished us *bon voyage* and hoped we should not have a difficult journey home.

The Comtesse quoted a few lines about Madame Wellington Koo translated from a Chinese newspaper:

> "*On sent son parfum,*
> *On voit ses chiens,*
> *Et puis elle arrive.*"

It was after dinner, while we were having coffee in the lounge, that the Comtesse said, "I think you will be presented to the Maréchal to-night."

Ever since we had met the Comtesse she had brought all her influence to bear to arrange this for us. We had already been introduced by her to Madame Pétain. I had expected to see a frail old lady; instead she was tall, handsome, looked young, practical, and capable of dealing with any situation.

The Maréchal in the evenings generally sat for a while in the lounge; a corner was screened off for him. Comte Hector de Béarn came over and said that we should be presented to

the Maréchal in a few minutes. The Comtesse was overjoyed.

"I hope to goodness we don't have to say anything!" I remarked.

Huffer said, "I hope not, but if you do, Myers, for heaven's sake remember to address the Maréchal as Monsieur le Maréchal."

The Comtesse thought that we should thank him for having received us.

"In English or in French, Comtesse?" I asked.

"In French," she said, and we all put our heads together to think of the shortest and most courteous way.

I asked Darby to say our little piece. "At least you'll remember to say Monsieur le Maréchal!"

There was a general flutter of excitement; the Maréchal was waiting to receive us.

Two officers escorted us behind the screen. Standing among a crowd of diplomatic and military officials was a white-headed man; his fresh complexion and bright eyes made me wonder if this could really be Maréchal Pétain. I had not imagined that any one over eighty could look so alert and alive.

He spoke to one of the officials: "So these are the two American ambulance drivers?"

"*Non, non, Monsieur le Maréchal*, they are English, but have been driving for the Château de Blois, an American unit."

The Maréchal looked very surprised. "*Ah, mais alors, elles sont anglaises.*"

He turned to me: "You understand French?"

"*Mais oui, Monsieur le Maréchal.*"

He spoke slowly and distinctly to make sure we understood.

"I thank you for the excellent work you have done for us. I regret that the relations between our two countries are at

present a little strained, but there is no real animosity between us, and I hope it will not be long before we both know happier times."

Everybody smiled and bowed. We were about to go when Darby stood her ground and said our little piece; every one looked immensely surprised and pleased. As we left both Huffer and I congratulated her.

"Well, I was determined to get it in," said Darby.

I saw Dan Brigham in the lounge and told him we were leaving to-morrow.

"I know; you're catching the six o'clock train for Marseille."

"Have you been taking lessons from the Gestapo?" I asked.

"It's not necessary; you're on our day book."

"What's that?"

Dan explained; it contained the names of people whose movements were followed day by day. As there was no publishable story about us yet, apparently we should be news if we disappeared. Should we do so the *New York Times* would from their day book know the last place where we had been seen and from there start to make inquiries.

"It sounds like the *New York Times* versus the Gestapo!"

Dan hailed Huffer as he passed and said, "Don't worry about the girls; we shall check up their movements."

It sounded rather ominous.

The tables around us had been empty, but two men Dan had recently pointed out came and sat as near as possible to us; the obvious manner in which they were straining their ears toward us seemed childishly stupid.

The Comtesse came over to bid us a final farewell.

"Be careful you don't step backward, Comtesse," I said

quite loudly. "I'm afraid you'll knock over one of the Gestapo."

"*Tiens, ils sont partout.*" The two agents slipped away.

"*Sales mouches vertes,*" I heard forcibly expressed—it was the latest term for *sales Boches.*

Darby joined us, and the Comtesse brushed aside all our attempts to thank her for the infinite trouble she had taken to have us presented to the Maréchal.

We did our final shopping in the morning. I was buying some powder, and without noticing gave a German mark. The *vendeuse* looked at it aghast.

"Oh, I'm sorry. It's worth twenty francs; it was given as change to me in Paris."

"Well, it's not negotiable here," the *vendeuse* said vehemently.

There were no banking arrangements between the two zones, and rumor had it that the dollar was to be blocked. Fortunately, Huffer had an account in francs in Vichy. He had given Darby and me ten thousand francs each, which would be more than sufficient to see us to Lisbon, provided we were not held up. He had, moreover, arranged with his bank in Vichy that should we at any time cable for money they were to send it to us. My father had already wired me that he had deposited money in Lisbon and had paid and reserved our seats in the plane from there to England.

Huffer thought we should call on Général Morrison, who, he believed, was now in Marseille, but whose address he did not know. He gave us a letter of introduction and wrote on the back of his card, "*Demandez au Commandant de la place où se trouve le Médecin Général Morrison.*"

When I asked who and where was "*le Commandant de la*

place" he replied somewhat airily, "My dear girl, everybody knows him in Marseille."

We quite firmly said we were going off to buy a suitcase. Huffer would not hear of it; he considered his cook's shopping bag quite good enough to see us home.

In Paris one of our most urgent needs had been a suitcase; we were both sick to death of tying and untying our improvised peasant's bundles with pieces of string and rope. Huffer considered suitcases waste of money, and said they were heavy things and we should only have to pay overweight on the 'plane home. We did, however, manage to persuade him to give us his cook's shopping bag, which, if not elegant, was one step forward.

Huffer's parting gifts were some flowers and a pot of jam; he came to see us off, and while we were waiting for the train to come in we tried not to show how we dreaded leaving such a pillar of strength.

"Good-by, Mr. Huffer. We simply can't thank you enough."

"Don't forget to wire New York when you reach Lisbon, and Myers, don't call Général Morrison 'monsieur'!"

The train steamed out before I had time to think of a suitable reply; his tall figure soon became a speck in the distance. To-morrow he would return to Paris, and it would be a long time before we should meet again.

We sat back in the comfortable first-class carriage, which we had to ourselves. Our thoughts did not dwell on the journey to Lisbon; we were used to taking things as they came, and we saw no hurdles to jump in the future. We thought our exit permits and visas would take two or three days at the outside to obtain at Marseille—then home, James, home. We

had already halved the distance; we had the order for our exit permit sanctioned, introductions galore, and plenty of money.

Life after Vichy might lose a little of its luster, but we saw no dirty weather ahead. We knew how much we should miss Huffer, and taking leave of his friends had given us a sinking feeling; we had received such kindness and hospitality from them all, and so much might intervene before we met again.

It was the 21st of August, and little did we think that within three weeks we should be trailing back to Vichy in a third-class carriage, weary, bedraggled, and filthy, the only bright touch about us being the new suitcases which we had bought in Marseille. Our wildest flights of imagination would not have credited that Henri, shabby and down at heel, would be carrying them for us.

11

Marseille

WE ARRIVED AT MARSEILLE at a quarter to five in the morning. There were few porters and no taxis. We were told that taxis were very rare, as petrol was severely rationed, and the porters could give us no idea where we could get a room, for Marseille, like Vichy, was chock-a-block.

Except for a few stray cats the streets were deserted. We wandered down the main road leading from the station and woke up the sleepy *concierges* of several hotels. The story was always the same: there was not a room to be had. What with my greatcoat, Darby's mackintosh, Huffer's shopping bag, and our knapsacks, we did not feel like wandering about much longer, but as we turned back to the station to leave our things there a woman grasping her shawl tightly around her came toward us. She said she knew for certain of a hotel only a few streets away which had a room to let.

Although I have never read any advice to lonely women arriving early or late in strange towns, to follow an unknown woman along the deserted streets of Marseille I felt certain would not be in the book of rules. Darby and I thought it a foregone conclusion that we should be led to a brothel.

"Well, Darby," I said, "I really don't see that we need be so fussy. Provided the beds look comfortable and the room clean I don't know that I mind very much; we can always

lock the door, and, as the nasty Kommandant at Soissons said, one can scream. In any case, as we can't call on the Général until ten, it will be somewhere to wash and change."

We were led down a narrow, winding street; the woman rang the bell of one of the tall houses which, with its closed shutters, looked as lifeless as the rest. The door was promptly opened by a respectable-looking woman who apparently owned the house. We followed her up to a room which was barely furnished, but had running hot and cold water and was scrupulously clean.

We told Madame that as we had been traveling all night we were going to have a few hours' rest. She turned down the bed and opened the windows while her husband brought up our baggage. When my khaki cap fell out of the bag Madame could not contain her curiosity. Enthralled, she listened to my brief description of our days at the front. "*Quelle misère, quelle catastrophe.*" Much as she disliked the Italians, in her opinion they were better than "*les sales Boches.*"

She was standing by the open window when she said this in her raucous voice, and I felt compelled to warn her.

"Do be careful what you say. Although this is unoccupied France, there are informers everywhere . . . even among the French."

Her husband said he had already warned her to guard her tongue, but she never could control herself for long. Darby and I begged her to be careful. I suggested *les sales mouches vertes* as a less dangerous epithet for the expression of her feelings.

There were no eating arrangements in the house, but the baker and the café near-by were opening. We took Huffer's

pot of jam, bought some *croissants*, sat in a café opposite, and soon became the center of interest to the workmen coming in for their early drinks. The coffee even at that hour and in that back street was good.

We returned to our room and slept. We woke up at nine, and set out to find "*le Commandant de la place*." Although we could make ourselves understood to the *gendarmes* it was difficult for us to catch their replies, as we were unaccustomed to the accent of the South, but in the end we managed to find out that the Commandant would be found at the *bas fort* Saint-Nicolas.

It was a hot day, despite the fury of the mistral, and it took half an hour's trudge to get there. Neither of us liked the look of the fort, which was as old and as grim as the Cherche-Midi. Heavily barred windows looked on to the long drive which led up to the main entrance. Darby said, "This is the last place I should have chosen to come to."

"Well, this time it is only a question of minutes."

The Commandant was helpful. Besides the address of Général Morrison, he told us where we should find the American, Spanish, and Portuguese Consuls, and, as taxis were practically unobtainable, he made out the route for us by tram. We asked him what the fort was used for; he told us it was still a military tribunal and prison. We had had more than enough of prisons, and were glad to leave.

We walked along the old port to the Cannebière, one of the noisiest and most cosmopolitan streets in the world, to catch our tram to the Hôpital Michel Levy, where Général Morrison was stationed. It was a huge hospital, even bigger than that at Soissons.

We learned that the Général was at a military conference,

but when our letter of introduction from Huffer was sent in he came out to meet us, accompanied by a colonel. We told him that we wanted to get to the Préfecture and visit several consuls, and as we doubted if we should be able to get around to them all by tram in a day, we should be very grateful if he could let us have a car.

The Général said the colonel would attend to that for us, and asked if we had managed to get a room in Marseille; when we told him that we did not think our room satisfactory he immediately offered to put us up in the hospital, and, as he had to return to the conference, he left the colonel to attend to the details of writing out a military pass for us to use the car.

Much to his annoyance, one of the majors had his car commandeered. The main gates were thrown open, the soldiers in the courtyard looked at us in astonishment, and the guards leaped to attention as we swept away.

"Well, Myers," said Darby, "I've no objection to being treated as royalty for a day."

The major's chauffeur took us under his personal charge. At the Préfecture, which he seemed to know inside out, he led us unerringly through the complicated passages to the room we required to get our exit permit. There was a queue of over two hundred people waiting to get in, and I foresaw a long, dreary wait. That day we were lucky, the chauffeur had a friend inside. . . . Shamefacedly we skipped the queue—it was the only time Darby and I ever skipped a queue in Marseille.

We accomplished little that day, but by having a car to dash hither and thither we found out most of the ropes. We were first of all told at the Préfecture that our exit permits

would take three weeks. The personal letter we had from the Chef du Bureau de la Circulation succeeded in reducing the time to two days. We were told to fill up numerous forms, buy ten-franc stamps from the post-office, and return and leave our passports with two photographs. So during the two days nothing further could be done.

Cook's told us that before it was possible to obtain a Portuguese visa five hundred francs had to be deposited with them as a guarantee that one would not arrive in Portugal penniless. The cost of a Portuguese visa was a hundred and twenty francs, and would take three weeks to obtain. If, however, one paid a supplementary two hundred and eighty francs it could be got through in two or three days. The Spanish visa was unobtainable until the Portuguese had been procured. The fare for the train up to the French frontier at Cerbère was paid in francs. Cook's could tell us the price of the fare from the Spanish frontier at Port Bou to Lisbon, but all else was wrapped in mystery.

The post-office was full, but our Admirable Crichton queued up for us; when we had filled up our forms we returned to the Préfecture and handed in our passports.

It was still quite early in the afternoon, and, hoping the major had no urgent need for this car, we readily accepted the chauffeur's offer to take us for another drive. As we had two days on our hands, he suggested we spend them bathing at Catalan, the sandy beach on the outskirts of Marseille.

Over drinks in the beach restaurant we asked him if he would collect our luggage. At the Hôpital Michel Levy we were given a large double room in the doctors' wing. As no mention had been made concerning meals we went to the nearest restaurant for dinner and hoped for an early night.

We would have had one but for a large cockroach which I suddenly saw lying on its back waving its legs in the air. I can cope with the smaller creepy-crawlies, but anything larger than an earwig leaves me paralytic with horror.

"Darby, do chuck that thing out of the window."

"I can't touch it; you throw it away."

We both stared at it helplessly; neither of us would get into bed for fear it would turn over and fly about the room. We said what a blessing it was that there were only bugs at the Cherche-Midi. The rats had not really worried us, but had there been cockroaches, beetles, or spiders we did not think we could have borne it. We sat on the bed and discussed the best methods of ejecting it. Neither of us would take the initiative.

With our tails between our legs we went to the nurses' sitting-room and asked if one of them would be kind enough to remove the cockroach. A nurse came in, and with no concern whatever flicked it out of the window saying, "But you must get used to these little annoyances."

From the sun-bathing at Catalan we were both getting as brown as berries; we were putting on much of the weight we had lost. Darby was now sleeping better and had lost her haggard look, but we felt rather fed up. We looked far too fit to spin any hard-luck story when we got home with any hope of success. In an attempt at consolation I said, "We can always say, 'Of course sun-bathing on the Riviera did us a power of good, but you should have seen us before.' "

We dined at our favourite restaurant, the Florida. The head waiter told us that the blockade would have terrible effects on France during the winter. Food was already short and the Germans seized a considerable proportion of the products

from North Africa which came in by boat to Marseille. However, the waiter seemed to bear no malice toward Britain; he seemed to see the necessity of the blockade. So did the fishermen whose boat we had hired during the afternoon.

I was hankering to see the Château d'If, and although we could not land the fisherman rowed us around the island, and on our return to the Old Port he pointed out the damage caused by the recent bombardments. He told us that one afternoon some Italian 'planes had suddenly swooped from the sky and dropped their bombs in the narrow streets; there had been no raid warning, and five hundred people were killed.

Our two days' rest was over. We had been told that our passports would be ready at the Préfecture, and we spent most of the day in the queue waiting for our turn. Our patience was rewarded when we saw the exit permit stamped on the passports. Now for the Portuguese and Spanish visas.

Much has been written of the packed roads of France, but little has been said of the queues outside the consulates in Marseille. To join them one required infinite patience, perseverance, and fairly good health to stand the long hours of waiting. Although we had letters of introduction to the Portuguese and Spanish Consuls, it was not possible to get anywhere near the doors to hand them in. They were open from eight till twelve in the morning; in the afternoon the Spanish Consulate opened from two till four, and the Portuguese from four until six.

The queues started forming at seven in the morning, and were dispersed at noon to re-form again for the afternoon. Darby and I were crazy not to have bought a couple of stools; but standing for hours in the street with the sun beating down, the mistral blowing our skirts around our heads

and dust into our eyes, so frayed our tempers that by twelve we were incapable of doing anything other than flop into the nearest café. We both realized that the most sensible thing would be to do a round of the shops in search of stools; it was only the absolute urgency of getting our visas which forced us on our feet again to join the queue.

After a day and a half's wait outside the Portuguese Consulate we got within its portals. We gave up the receipt for five hundred francs from Cook's, paid the supplementary two hundred and eighty francs, and were told to fetch our passports at nine-thirty in the morning.

They were ready at nine-thirty the next day and we dashed along to the Spanish Consulate; but the guard shook his head. The queue was far too long; we had not a hope of getting in by twelve, and as it was Saturday the Consulate would not be open in the afternoon. He advised us to come back Monday morning early.

Monday morning saw us at seven-thirty outside the Spanish Consulate; we joined an already long queue. A little after eight a taxi arrived with a large American family. Their idea was a good one; they kept the taxi and took it in turn to stand in the queue while the others remained comfortably seated. We should not have envied them their ingenuity and affluence, but Darby and I had an attack of pure sour grapes which made us feel quite bolshy.

About eleven an official came out and handed numbers to people a little in front of us down to the Americans in the taxi. We were told to come back in the afternoon; the rest of the queue was told to re-form the next morning. With our numbers clutched in our hands Darby and I thankfully dragged ourselves along to the Florida solemnly swearing that

never again in our lives would we ever stand in a queue for pleasure, however good the show. When we returned in the afternoon we were told to leave our passports, which would be returned to us in the morning complete with visas. There was only one train a day for the frontier, which left at seven-forty in the evening, so we should be off the next day.

Like lambs in spring we skipped round to the Bank of France. Cook's had told us that we paid for our tickets in francs to Cerbère and that not more than five hundred francs per person could be exchanged at the Spanish frontier. As Huffer feared the dollar would be blocked, he wanted all the francs we did not need returned to him when we left France; we decided that we could not possibly want for our journey to Lisbon more than eighteen pounds each—we preferred to take the money in pounds, as the stability of the franc outside France seemed so uncertain.

When we saw the endless queue at the bank our spirits sank. We were attended to just before the bank closed. To begin with we were told that we could not take money out of France, as we had declared none coming in. We explained that the question of declaring our money when we came into France had never arisen, as we had come over in a troopship with our ambulances, and had driven straight to Paris without any formalities whatsoever. They listened to our story with sympathy.

"How many pounds do you want to take out of France?"

"How much can we take?"

"How much do you want to take?"

"Eighteen pounds each."

We were asked to fill in the usual endless forms and to leave

our passports. We explained that they were at the Spanish Consulate. Although they would have done anything for us, they could do nothing without our passports, as the authority to take money out of France had to be stamped upon them. We still saw no reason why we should not leave the next evening. We had been told our passports would be ready in the morning, and the Bank had promised that once they had them the authorization for the money would be seen to straight away. We went back to the Hôpital Michel Levy, packed our things, and wrote letters of thanks to the general, colonel, and major.

We said good-by to the soldiers, doctors, and nurses, who for some reason or another, despite the fact that we had our exit permits, could not believe it possible we should get to England during the war. Their parting words were, "Tell England to bomb *les sales Boches* to hell."

Our passports were not ready in the morning, neither were they by the early afternoon. The Bank of France closed at four; at half-past three we became quite frantic. At five minutes to four our passports were handed to us, and we arrived at the bank just as it closed. Another twenty-four hours to fill in—unless we left that night with the five hundred francs each which would just cover the third-class railway fare through Spain, with nothing to spare for rooms or food. Cook's had told us that, as there was no through train from Port Bou to Lisbon, we should have to spend a night in Barcelona and Madrid. Seething as we were with impatience to be gone, it seemed only common sense to wait for the bank to open in the morning.

After our final farewells we did not relish the idea of asking for our room for another night. Our return to the hospital

merely confirmed the general opinion that we were just crazy to think we should ever reach England.

The next morning the bank handed us each eighteen pounds. It was grand to see English notes again—good solid sterling. A final lunch at the Florida, a final walk around Marseille, and at last it was time to make our way to the station. We arrived an hour before the train was due to start and bought second-class tickets to Cerbère; we should have to change at Narbonne at 1 A.M., and wait there until 6 A.M. for the connecting train. We had been told that seats were unbookable, but we discovered that first- and second-class seats were bookable from a main terminus. The third-class carriages of the train were already packed, the rest of the seats reserved. We sat on our new suitcases in the corridor of a second-class carriage. The train was a slow one and stopped at practically every station until it reached its terminus, Bordeaux. We soon became thankful that we were to leave at Narbonne. Our next train, we imagined, could not be worse than this; the corridor became so tightly packed with humanity that one could not move an inch. Fortunately Darby and I were near the exit door of the corridor, and were able to jump out at each stop and watch the struggling mass from the platform. The crowds in the corridor did not, or could not, move, so the people in the carriages who wanted to get out had no means of exit except through the windows. It was not a question of the people in the corridor squeezing themselves even tighter to allow a passage; the only possible means of making way was for half of them to get on to the platform. This rarely happened, with the result that many could not get out at the station they wanted.

Exhausted, we arrived at Narbonne. Even had there been

a room, which we doubted, we did not feel it was worth while taking one for six hours, so we made our way to the buffet, which was open, but served only coffee. It was there that I met the Spaniard who told me the train for Cerbère was already in a siding, and all we had to do was to cross the lines and sleep in it till it started. Somehow one always doubts information given by strangers; however, the porter on the platform confirmed what he said, and the Spaniard offered to carry our luggage to the train. I returned to the buffet for Darby to tell her the good news. She also had met a stranger, and his news was far from good—the Spanish frontier had been closed to the British. Darby looked worried and depressed. I never take much notice of people who loom up in the night; I suspected that for two hundred francs he would have "opened" the frontier for us. Were it closed, the Spanish Consul, I thought, would never have given us our visas.

We arranged ourselves in two corner seats, the Spaniard took the third. We luxuriously stretched ourselves out and dropped off to sleep, but not for long; we had to make room for four French officers. Even sitting upright we had snatches of sleep, but I woke up feeling cramped and went out to the corridor to stretch my legs, and at that early hour of the morning the train was already packed. A woman with three children and seven bundles anxiously asked if there was a seat in our carriage. I felt bound to tell the truth. I had seen her and the children standing all night in the corridor of the train from Marseille, and they looked, if they stood for another moment, as if they would drop from fatigue. The Spaniard helped haul in the children, the bundles, and the woman; he put one child on his knee, the woman held an-

other, and we made room for the third. As the children were whimpering through utter exhaustion, sleep became impossible.

The train puffed slowly on amidst the sand-dunes and the gnarled trees blown sidewise by the constant winds. The Spaniard and the four officers left us at Perpignan, and among the five men who took their places was a rubicund, white-headed American whose name I soon learned was J. E. Bernard. In a matter of minutes he became commandant of the carriage; he told the men he did not care to see women standing in the corridor; we reshuffled the space we had, and made room for two extra. He picked up on to his knee one of the children sitting at our feet, and handed around sweets, chocolates, and cigarettes, even producing his flask of brandy. The cost of Martell Three Star brandy in Marseille was only eighty-five francs a bottle; I had bought two there, but in the corridor crush one had been smashed to smithereens. Perhaps Darby remembers my language while I was picking the pieces of glass out of my things when we managed to get out on to the platform. I think the aroma from my knapsack made us both doze for quite a time, despite our cramped positions, when we got back into the corridor.

Mr. Bernard asked if we knew the formalities at the frontier, and on hearing that we did not, offered to take us under his wing. We would arrive at Cerbère at 10 A.M.; the journey from there to Port Bou was only a question of five minutes in the little train which ran through the tunnel under the mountains, and which generally left about half-past twelve.

The Spaniards would only allow between twenty-five to fifty people a day to cross the frontier from Cerbère. On arrival one had to give up one's passport for examination,

which was returned a few minutes before the train was due to start, and Mr. Bernard said the thing to do was to be one of the first to fetch them.

At each stop along the coast people left the train, and at Port-Vendres, the last stop before Cerbère, more people got out. We wandered along the corridors to see how many people were left; the long train which had been so packed was now practically empty, and as far as we could make out there were not more than thirty of us going on.

We handed in our passports at Cerbère and wandered around the picturesque fishing village. Mr. Bernard wanted to send a wire, and Darby and I returned by telegraphic money order all the francs we had to Huffer's bank in Vichy.

We whiled away the time drinking coffees with Mr. Bernard in one of the little cafés overlooking the beach; we were desperately impatient to be off, and sat gazing at the mountains which separate France from Spain. As it was doubtful whether one could get food from Port Bou to Barcelona, Mr. Bernard had ordered an early lunch at the station buffet for the three of us. While we were tackling an omelette Mr. Bernard pointed out a young and extremely attractive-looking girl sitting at the bar; her job, he told us, was to get any information she could and pass it on to the Spanish officials. I always find it difficult to believe these tags attached to people, but Mr. Bernard assured me that in a few minutes I should see her busy at her job of getting into apparently harmless conversations with as many people waiting to cross the frontier as she could. Sure enough, before we had finished our lunch she had left the bar, and had found some reason or another to get into conversation with several of our fellow-passengers.

Our passports were ready; we waited outside a door in the entrance to the station, which was soon opened and led into a smaller room with a barrier leading on to the platform for the train crossing the frontier. Behind the barrier were three officials, and the passports were piled, according to nationality, on the counter in front of them.

Although we were the first to arrive, we were soon surrounded by a crowd. The officials said that they would hand out the passports in the order in which they had listed them. Mr. Bernard's name was soon called. "I'll keep you two seats in the train," he said, as he disappeared through the barrier.

Darby and I could not see among the passports any British pile. "Myers, do you see where our passports are?"

"They don't seem to be with the others."

"No, they are not; they're on that table over there."

They were lying in forlorn isolation on a bare table behind the officials. We did not dare think, hope, or despair, but the fact that our passports, which we knew were in perfect order, had been laid on one side was far from encouraging. Although we waited in silence while name after name was being called out and the lucky ones passed through, the unspoken thought that some unforeseen force was at work was not far from our minds.

Eventually the officials handed us back our passports. "The frontier is closed to all British," they said.

"Since when?"

"Yesterday."

"When will it be reopened?"

"It is impossible to say."

We knew that the Spanish frontier had been closed to all our allies of military age, but that it should now be closed

to women was a brand-new idea. The blow was so swift, shattering, and final that we were almost bereft of feeling. We might have flopped in despair in the station had we not pulled ourselves together to try to find Mr. Bernard—the least we could do was to thank him for being such a good companion.

Since we could not pass through the barrier, we dashed around the station and tried to get on to the platform by another entrance; we were stopped by the guards. In desperation I bellowed at the top of my voice, "Mr. Bernard! Mr. Bernard!"

He heard me above the general din and came running toward us.

"We can't pass. The frontier is closed to the British."

Mr. Bernard was a man of initiative and instant action; he knew we were ambulance drivers captured in the German lines. He vehemently insisted that the guards let him pass, and came back with us to the room where we had been handed our passports, which was empty now except for the officials. His oration was masterly. "Do you realize that these are English ambulance drivers who have risked their lives for your wounded? The hardships they have been through. . . . Is this how you thank them? . . . Where is your gratitude? . . ."

The officials listened attentively. It was not they who had closed the frontier . . . they were powerless to intervene . . . there was nothing they could do. . . .

"But you can let them leave France," yelled Mr. Bernard.

"*Bien sûr*, monsieur, but if we let them pass they will only be stopped at Port Bou."

"I'll speak to them there. I'll do my utmost to get them through, and I beg of you, messieurs, to let them pass."

The officials shrugged their shoulders. "If they go they will come back, but if you wish to try you may."

Had we any feelings left they would have been swept away by the rush of the few minutes. The rest of the passengers were already in the train, which we were now holding up. Our luggage was cursorily examined, the eternal forms roughly filled in, but the declaration of our money was carefully gone into, and helter-skelter we were rushed to the train. With the shrill squeak of the toy whistle we left the Spanish frontier.

Mr. Bernard asked us to show him our passports. We wondered why he seemed so delighted with them. "Because they have not been stamped "exit," so if the worst comes to the worst and I can't get you through you can return to France."

"I've never understood what really happens to people who get stuck on frontiers," I remarked. "One is always hearing that they can not go on and they can not go back; the earth doesn't swallow them up, the skies aren't rent asunder. Are they imprisoned, interned, or left?"

Mr. Bernard did not know. As far as we were concerned, if we could not go on we could at least go back.

We steamed out of the tunnel and slowly drew into the little village of Port Bou. Posters of General Franco were plastered all over the station; we were directed by officials and soldiers to the passport office, and headed the queue waiting to have them examined.

The passport officials glanced at Mr. Bernard's and waved him on. When they came to ours they did not even bother to open them; it was sufficient that they were British.

"You must return to France," they said.

Mr. Bernard's oration was as masterly as his last, but this time it was ineffectual. The officials had many people to attend to . . . would we please go back to the train, which would be returning in a few minutes.

Mr. Bernard was extremely worried about us, and made sure we had enough money. "The frontier will probably be opened in a few days," he said. "Go straight back to Perpignan, where there is a Spanish Consul. Whatever you do, don't hang around Cerbère; it's full of crooks and dregs of every kind. I hate having to leave you here."

As his kind, cheery face disappeared in a crowd Darby said, "Well, what nice people one does meet in trains."

Mr. J. E. Bernard was indeed a friend. I picked up later in London the trail of our woes, which he had blazoned half across Europe.

We returned to the empty train. Darby makes a good companion; she would always listen for hours to my chatter, but she never made any attempt to disturb me on the rare occasions when I became enveloped in a Great Silence. Now the merest glimmer of a glow-worm would have been brilliant illumination compared with my feelings.

The train started. . . . We were back in Cerbère once more. I forgave the officials for smiling when they saw us, as they never said, "I told you so." We asked where we could change our pounds back into francs—it was the first thing to be done. The officials looked at us. "But you can not change pounds into francs."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because yesterday England blocked the pound."

12

En Route for Home

My first reaction was sheer rage—what had Whitehall done now? If there were a good reason to block the pound the least they could do was to warn people; posters should have been stuck up in banks stating what was about to happen.

We went to the station buffet and ordered some coffee. Ranting made me feel better. We came down to brass tacks; what could we do now? Darby found a fifty-franc note tucked away in a corner of her bag, and I had two ten-franc coins left; seventy francs between us—better than nothing at all. We heard that the barman might exchange a few pounds at a very low rate of exchange, the equivalent of six shillings for the pound. We had no option but to take his terms, and he would change us only two pounds each.

Feeling utterly fed up, we got into an empty train leaving for Perpignan. I curled myself in a corner. I tried to console myself. We might be in a jam—we *were* in a jam, but at least we were not imprisoned.... There were such things as consuls, Bob Murphy, and Dick Warner—we knew they would do what they could. We could always have the ten pounds a month which the American Consuls were allowing British subjects. We were miles better off than any one in Fresnes.

Darby was still turning the situation over in her mind. I buried my head farther into my greatcoat and muttered

through it that I considered our luck was on the downward grade. It would not surprise me if before things got any better they would get a great deal worse. Perhaps we would not be able to get any money from Huffer's bank. Perhaps America would enter the war, in which case the American Embassy would no longer be taking over British interests. Perhaps it would be a good thing if America entered the war, but if our luck was out she would of course do so on the date most inconvenient to ourselves, and it might be weeks before some other embassy took over British interests. So far we had had fairly good health, but that might not last. Germany or Italy might occupy the whole of France, in which case we might be interned.

I asked Darby if she could think of anything I had left out. There was silence for some time until she said, "Yes, there is something else. If the Spanish frontier doesn't open within a few days our exit permit will expire."

"Besides that, we shall probably never get a room in Perpignan and will have to sleep in the station—what fun we shall have!"

"Well, in any case we haven't any money for a room."

"Better people than us, my dear, have lived on credit."

"I've never understood how they get away with it," Darby said thoughtfully.

"Perhaps we shall find out."

Our financial crisis had reduced us to a third-class carriage; the mere thought of sleeping on benches in a railway station made the seats seem like a feather bed.

Darby shook me. "Wake up, Myers. This is Perpignan."

Though hungry, we thought our resources would only run to coffee; amiably we discussed our different temperaments.

Darby was all for husbanding our resources. I could not see what good our little bit of money was to us and was all for having a good dinner regardless of expense. I agreed that we must put aside enough to telephone and wire Bob Murphy and the bank in Vichy. Telegrams were fairly costly, and by the time we had deducted what we considered sufficient we had only a few francs left.

"Well, Darby, let's be reckless and spend them on telephoning to try to get a room."

The waiter gave us the names of three hotels; we tried the Hôtel du Petit Paris, the first on our list. Miracle of miracles! A double room had just become vacant; they would keep it for us for half an hour.

We leapt on to a tram. The Hôtel du Petit Paris looked expensive, but we could stay there *en pension* for four and a half guineas a week; we booked the room. It was getting on for seven, too late to try and get in touch with Vichy, so we dined and went to bed early, drowsily talking of what we should do in the future. Darby said that a man who had got into the carriage at Port-Vendres had told her that the boats sailing from there and Marseille to Tunis and Algiers took passengers. If the Spanish frontier was not opened it seemed an idea. With that in our minds we fell asleep.

Our life for the next few days was centered round the post-office; wires took anything from an hour to a few days to be delivered in France, and it took from one to four hours for a trunk call to be put through.

We felt several years younger after we had spoken to Huffer's bank manager; he would send us ten thousand francs each immediately.

I got through to the American Embassy in Vichy; Bob

Murphy was away, but Dick Warner's advice to us was to stay where we were—he hoped the frontier question would be settled in a few days.

"If it is not settled one can leave by boat for North Africa."

"What good will that do you?"

"Well, from the west coast we can get a boat to Lisbon."

Dick Warner seemed to think I was crazy. "It might take you months, and in any case you won't be able to get an exit permit for the French colonies."

We wired our homes: "Probable delay, but all's well."

It seemed that the Spanish frontier was now closed to most nationalities, and quite a crowd of us spent most of our time in the post-office wiring and phoning. We met a Swiss and a Greek who had been turned back. The Swiss feared he would miss his boat from Lisbon to South America, and suggested that if we could not cross through Spain we should spend the duration of the war in Switzerland. He told us that despite the German occupation of Denmark she was still exporting food to Switzerland, and he talked of the thousands of French and Polish soldiers interned there. The Poles, he said, had almost to a man arrived with their full equipment.

The days passed; we gave up going around to the Spanish Consulate, as we could get no information from them at all. We received our money from Vichy, and felt selfishly sorry when the Greek and the Swiss were allowed through. As there was no sign of the frontier being opened to the British, we went to the Préfecture, as our exit permit was about to expire. We were getting desperate, and asked the Préfet if he would renew our exit permit *via* Port-Vendres. He was sympathetic, but there was nothing he could do; only Vichy could alter the town of our departure, and Marseille or Cer-

bère would renew our exit permits when the frontier was opened to the British. Letters to the Préfets of Vichy, Marseille, or Cerbère might eventually be attended to, but the Préfet of Perpignan advised us that it would be far better to go ourselves.

We returned to our hotel and thrashed out what we intended to do. We had been told that there were several thousand British still on the Riviera; many were staying at a hotel taken over for them at specially reduced rates. With the allowance of ten pounds per month from the American Consul we could stay in France indefinitely. The idea appealed to neither of us, and I was dead against it.

We gathered that there was some one in Cannes, Nice, and Monte Carlo looking after British interests, but I imagined that if we went and joined them with our exit permits expired we should be at the bottom of a long list of people hoping to leave, and one could not get away from the fact that France might at any time be entirely occupied and all British subjects interned. To wait to be interned seemed a very tame ending. Darby agreed.

We had three alternatives: to continue hanging around Perpignan or Cerbère in the vague hope that the Spanish frontier would ultimately be opened to the British; go to Vichy and try to get our exit permits renewed by the Chef du Bureau de la Circulation, for Cerbère and Port-Vendres, or Cerbère and Marseille; or throw officialdom to the winds and take the law into our own hands.

Darby said, "I don't believe we are the type to do that."

I reviewed the picture I had conjured up of swimming rivers, climbing mountains, and sailing the seas in unchartered boats. It seemed to me chiefly a question of guides; but I

realized that if one could bribe a man for x pounds, should the Gestapo be anxious to trace us, the guide would probably think nothing of handing us over for x pounds plus x pounds.

Darby remarked wearily, "I wonder what the prisons and internment camps are like in this part of the world?"

"I think a guide book for travelers would be much more helpful if it graded the prisons in the towns as well as hotels."

Darby asked me to be serious and said, "I don't think there's much hope if we try by ourselves to take the law into our own hands. . . . If only we had a man with us. . . ."

Huffer was back in Paris, Dan Brigham and the rest in Vichy, and Henri and Lucien presumably still prisoners of war.

Darby and I were all for action. We discarded the idea of remaining in Perpignan or going to Cerbère; that left Vichy. Should that fail we would find a way out ourselves. We drew up a rough idea of our plan should we become desperate. Neither of us cared for it much, but my argument in favor of it was that, if everything failed, rather than wait chancing internment any risk was worth taking, and if we ended up in prison again at least this time there would be a reason. We decided to catch the evening train to Marseille and try our luck in Vichy.

During the afternoon we had tea with two French officers whom we had met in the post-office, and I heard for the first time that there existed some anti-British feeling in France; they told us it was not strong, and existed chiefly in the Army among officers and men who had been entirely incompetent themselves.

I told Darby I would meet her at our hotel an hour before our train was due to leave, and went off to buy some toothpaste. Toothpaste, like soap, face cream, hairpins, cigarettes, and matches, was becoming a rarity. Perpignan, one of the oldest and most quaint towns in France, under normal conditions would be a delight to tourists, but the streets were now so packed with refugees and foreigners that the charm of the place was lost; even the narrowest side street was as crowded as any busy town's main thoroughfare.

I tried chemist after chemist, and had just left the fifth in despair when I was jostled against some one in the crowd. I was about to apologize when my brain refused to function—the man in front of me was Henri. I gaped at him open-mouthed and speechless, and all Henri seemed capable of uttering was a long string of oaths ending in, "*Mon dieu, c'est Bessy!*"

Out of the twenty-five thousand things we wanted to say to each other we both found it difficult to string one sentence together.

"For heaven's sake let's get out of this mob," I at last managed to say.

"Right—this is my brother, Jacques."

Henri had often mentioned his brother, but the man standing before me made me momentarily lose interest in what had happened to Henri since those seemingly far-off Soissons days. Human beings are occasionally compared with scarecrows, but had I not met Jacques I would not have believed that any one could, without exaggeration, really look like one. All that he lacked was the straw sticking out of his ears.

His clothes were a collection of oddments which hung grotesquely from his skeleton frame. His eyes were some-

where at the back of his head, his cheeks were deep cavities in his hollow face, and his bones seemed to shoot out through his grey-green skin. When he opened his twisted mouth to say "*Enchanté de faire votre connaissance*," I noticed that there were only a few stumps of teeth left in his gums. Henri seemed unaltered, but looked far from prosperous; I guessed that he had not been able to touch his hundred thousand francs in Paris.

I had been thrown out of gear by the shock of our utterly unexpected meeting, and Jacques's appearance made me feel sick at heart. I already knew so many sad stories; I should have liked to hear one where every one lived happily ever afterwards, and the green grass grew all round. Instead, we found a café, and Henri told me one of the grimmest tales I have ever heard.

Jacques had been living in Brussels; just before Belgium entered the war all the residing foreigners were asked to fill in a form stating what services they would render in the event of war. As Jacques was not physically fit, he signed up for civil defense work. When Belgium entered the war she arrested pell-mell the majority of the men and women of all nationalities—English, French, Italian, German, Dutch, Poles, etc.—who had filled in these forms.

Without notice or warning they were taken from their houses, in the streets, or wherever they were, and in groups of sixty they were herded together in trucks built to hold forty men or ten horses. They had no idea why they were arrested or where they were being taken—Jacques's particular trainload was sent from Brussels to Perpignan. It took them five nights and four days to arrive. For hours on end the train was left in sidings; they were given no water or food,

and never once allowed out of the closed-in cattle trucks. Sixty men crowded into the space of forty—there was hardly room to breathe, and no room to lie down.

After two days Jacques managed to pull apart the bars in the truck and get his head through the grille. He screamed for water; with the butt of his rifle a French soldier hit him in the mouth—hence the condition of his teeth. About 15 per cent of the men died from exhaustion before they reached Perpignan.

The first thing Jacques did when he got on to the platform was to take from his pockets his fountain pen and the little money he had on him when arrested, and throw away his clothes. He stood on the platform naked except for his shoes; most of the men followed his example. Chalked up in large letters outside the trucks they had journeyed in was: "Beware of these men: they are parachutists."

"But why?" I asked. "Why?"

Jacques did not know, neither did any one else. He said, "There are Fifth Columnists these days in every country, but the proportion among our promiscuously arrested thousands must have been almost negligible."

The French officials, rather than march a lot of naked men through the streets, gave them pants. They were taken to the camp of Saint Cyprien where there were already several thousand interned; their money was taken from them, and even the teeth set into a gold plate were taken out of one poor devil's mouth.

The food, I gathered, was almost nil—soup on a par with Fresnes and severely rationed bread. The men would have given their souls for a cigarette.

Jacques laid a beautiful leather brief-case on the table; it

seemed so out of keeping with the rest of him that I was curious to know how he came by it.

"I swapped it for my fountain pen."

"Why?"

"Try to guess."

I could think of no reason.

The Saint Cyprien camp is built on sand-dunes; the internees live in a sea of blowing sand. The soup is served from a large bucket, but no one had been given anything to drink it from. Jacques had found an old wooden soap box which served fairly well as a soup plate, but, like everything else, it was always covered in sand, which in no way improved the flavor of the soup. There was a man in the camp who coveted his fountain pen, and Jacques willingly exchanged it for the brief-case, so that at least his soap-cum-soup box could be kept free from sand.

Henri had discovered Jacques by pure coincidence. When Henri left Soissons he had tried to get into Belgium, as he thought his father and brother were still in Brussels. As he had been unable to cross the frontier, he had made his way to Marseille, where he ran into a Belgian friend of Jacques, who had also been arrested in Brussels and sent to Saint Cyprien, where he met Jacques. The friend had managed to escape, and was now trying to trace his family.

On this chance information Henri went to Saint Cyprien and managed to help his brother *fout' le camp* only a few hours before I met them.

Jacques had a precarious existence before him. He had not been carrying his identification papers on him when arrested in the streets of Brussels, and in France it is extremely difficult

to live without them. None of the men at Saint Cyprien had had any trial or sentence; the French had no idea what to do with them, and were keeping them under sufferance; but should it ever be found out that Jacques had been there he would immediately be sent back.

Henri's plan was to tuck his brother away in a quiet corner until the end of the war, but to do this he wanted to get him to Marseille first. There were no such things as private cars or buses, so there was no option but to take the train, and this involved great risk. I learnt for the first time that no one was allowed to travel without a *sauf-conduit*. As far as Darby and I were concerned, ignorance had been bliss. As yet on trains our *sauf-conduit* had not been asked for, and we had always imagined our passports sufficient. Not only did Jacques need a *sauf-conduit*, but Henri said the railway station at Marseille now had a barrier outside the platforms, and no one was allowed through without showing his papers; but Henri had ideas up his sleeve, and the only thing to do was to hope they would work. Although Jacques had lost everything, there was some hope for him if he could regain his health and trace his wife. Neither of them knew what had happened to their father, who was last seen in Brussels. For all they knew he and Jacques's wife might also have been arrested and sent to one of the innumerable camps along this coast.

I was getting used to endless coincidences, so it did not surprise me in the least that Henri and Jacques had already arranged to leave for Marseille by the same train as ours. Glad as I was to meet Henri again, sorry as I was for Jacques, I was dreading the journey back with them to Marseille. After the war the condition of the French internment camps

will, I suppose, be investigated, but whatever is said, or is not said, I can not entirely blame the French.

At the time of which I am writing (August, 1940), France had not sufficient essential foods to feed adequately her own population, so what could she do with the hundreds of thousands who had left Belgium, Holland, and Poland, and were now penniless refugees on her own already overcrowded and depleted soil? What could she do with her own Jews, whom the Germans (in occupied France) had deprived of their homes and their wherewithal to live, and were now sending the destitute into unoccupied France? And what could unoccupied France do with the "parachutists" whom France had accepted without any specific charge against any one of them in the early days of the war?

Germany and Italy showed no desire to have their alleged "parachutists" back in their *Lebensraum*. The Englishman, in agreement with France's capitulation, could not leave, and no sign of any arrangements being made by the Germans for the "parachutists" of either sex to be repatriated to their various countries was in sight.

I do not believe that any one with any knowledge of France would ever accuse her of being a wantonly cruel nation. But, naturally, her own countrymen had to be fed first, and there was extremely little food left over for the homeless foreign millions.

As far as Jacques and company were concerned, the French had no power to free or repatriate them, so they would have to remain suspects until either the French came to some arrangement about them with the Germans, or until the end of the war.

It is one thing to theorize in one's own home; it is another

to travel with a starving scarecrow whose powers of resistance were so diminished that his rearrest meant quite plainly a fairly quick death by starvation. His appearance confirmed what I had already heard; a goodly proportion of the internees along the coast were dying off like flies—typhus helped a lot.

Some of the internees of Saint Cyprien had had a more fortunate journey than Jacques's truckload, and had been able to keep their clothes on them. Some even had managed to bring a few oddments with them. When Jacques, who had only his shoes and pants, told his comrades that he had a chance of escape, there had been an instant whip around; a coat, trousers, shirt, collar and tie, even a beret, had willingly been given by those who were left behind.

There were still two hours before the train left for Marseille, and Henri began to tell me what had happened at Soissons. A few hours after Darby and I had left the hospital Henri had made inquiries about us at the Kommandantur, and was told we had been taken to Laon. The following day he sent the baker there on a pretext of fetching some things for the hospital, but the baker failed to trace us. Then Henri himself made an excuse to go to the Kommandantur at Laon, but they assured him that we were not there, nor had we ever been, so he came to the conclusion that we had managed to *fout' le camp* before we got to Laon. He knew we had little money on us, and had expected me either to come back, or in some way communicate with him at Soissons. He waited three weeks, but the discipline of the hospital had been tightened up considerably, sentries had been posted at all the gateways, and he was no longer allowed to leave the hospital, even to go to the Kommandantur of Soissons. He realized

that if he did not make a getaway soon things would be so difficult that he would never be able to do so. He had got the tire and the spare parts he wanted for the car, and with three of his *copains* he escaped in it to Paris. Lucien had already successfully *fout'd le camp.* The baker, it appeared, was a heavily married man. In the small village where he lived all the bakers had been taken prisoners of war; his wife, a woman nearly double his age, found out that he was at Soissons, and had got permission from the German Kommandantur of her village to fetch the baker back. If it could be proved that a man's work was essential to his village, prisoners were sometimes released. So Madame la Baker had gone to Soissons with the necessary papers to free her husband.

"Don't you think it might have been his mother passing as his wife?" I asked, remembering his insistence that he would not marry until he had found *le grand amour.*

"No," said Henri, "because I saw their marriage certificate."

"What with being the sole baker of B——, his two girl friends, his *petite amie,* and his wife, I expect our baker will be kept pretty busy!"

Henri listened amazed to our adventures since we had left Soissons. He had no idea who the snake in the grass could be. Mademoiselle had not been freed; she was still at Soissons when Henri left. He told me he never received the letter I wrote to him from Laon; he had just been told to hand over the purse I had purposely left with him, and, as he had never been questioned about me, I saw no point in mentioning my diary. I considered that, for the moment anyway, there were some things best left unsaid.

We left Jacques in the café and returned to my hotel. Darby was sitting reading in the courtyard; I stood some

distance off and thoroughly enjoyed watching her face when Henri greeted her.

The crowds at the station were worse than we expected, for it was a fight even to get on to the platform; when the train came in people were standing six rows deep. Henri made a cat-like jump and managed to get seats. Each stop was grim anxiety in case the *gendarmes* searched the train; fortunately, when they did Henri saw them coming, and Jacques was hastily pushed on to the platform and managed to slip back into one of the carriages which had already been searched. When he returned he told us he had recognized two men whom we had seen arrested in the corridor as prisoners from his camp.

There was no train to sleep in when we arrived at Narbonne, as, returning to Marseille, one had to wait for the Bordeaux express, which was not due for another six hours. We were thankful for Jacques's sake that the heavy mist on the ground was turning into fog. We found a restaurant, and I was lost in admiration for Jacques; he was starving, but managed to eat as though good food had been his daily fare. We urged him to take a second helping of each course; he would perhaps suffer from violent indigestion, but it seemed more important that he should have something solid inside him. The food did him good, and he began to lose his dazed and vacant expression. I felt that even if he were arrested before he reached Marseille at least he would have had a decent meal.

Darby and Jacques returned to the station and tried to snatch a few hours' sleep in a luggage trolley; Henri and I wandered around Narbonne. Everything was now closed; we turned down two seats outside a café and continued to talk

and talk and talk. Henri had still not been officially demobilized, but thought that could be fairly easily arranged. He had not been able to touch his money in Paris and was practically penniless. He was a fully trained technician and used to managing factories, but as there were none working he was stuck.

I had heard Churchill's broadcast: Britain would give full support to all Frenchmen joining de Gaulle's army. If only Henri could manage to do so it seemed a way out. Germany, of course, has seen to it that Frenchmen can not leave France easily, but Henri said he would try.

The fog was thickening; at about three in the morning a man and woman carrying some bundles and trailing two small children behind loomed up and wearily asked if we knew of a room to be had in Narbonne. I advised them to find a café and sleep on the chairs outside; they walked on, and their drooping figures disappearing into the fog seemed to epitomize the millions of homeless refugees.

Darby and Jacques were still in the luggage trolley. Jacques had slept a little out of sheer exhaustion. The platform was as crowded as Perpignan, and this time we were not so lucky, as we managed to get only two seats. We took it in turn to stand in the crowded corridor; cramped and disheveled we arrived at Marseille—now for the barrier.

Henri told Darby and me to go ahead and said he would look after Jacques; we were to wait for them outside the station. At the barrier we were asked for our *sauf-conduit*, and showed our passports.

"How long are you remaining in Marseille?"

"We are going to Vichy by to-night's train."

"In that case you will not require your passports. Will you

please leave them here until you get your tickets this evening?"

We reluctantly handed them over and passed through the barrier. We heaved a sigh of relief when we saw Henri and Jacques waiting for us outside. It was about seven in the morning, and coffee and *croissants* was our next thought. The main road leading from the station was nearly as deserted as when we had arrived from Vichy and so expectantly looked for rooms.... Here we were back again with nothing accomplished.

Henri had to look after Jacques's affairs, and we arranged to meet them later on. In Perpignan Darby and I had been given an introduction to a well-known French family living in Marseille. We spent most of the day with them, and I found our host's political opinions novel and interesting. He was quite indifferent to the outcome of the war—if the Germans won France would have no liberty of thought or action; if England won he felt convinced France would become communistic, so automatically liberty of thought or action would disappear.

We met Henri and Jacques in a sordid café surrounded by a collection of rather evil-looking thugs. Used as we were to extremes, the atmosphere of the café after our host's beautiful villa was truly an enormous change. During the day Henri had managed to fix up Jacques's immediate future and had decided to accompany us to Vichy. We said good-by to Jacques. I have never heard of him since, but I like to think of him tucked safely away in some corner.

We returned to the station and found we had to change at Nîmes at one in the morning; through some misunderstanding we thought we had to wait there two hours for our connect-

ing train, and so we all calmly sat on the platform at Nîmes and without knowing it watched the train to Vichy puff out.

Many people have missed trains in their lives, but few can have been as furious as we were when we realized we had twenty-four hours to wait for our next connexion, with no prospect of a bed. We heard of a hotel which might possibly let us sit for the rest of the night in the lounge. The cloak-room of the station was closed; we piled as much of our luggage as we could on to Henri and lugged the rest along the ill-lit streets. Refugees were sleeping in their cars, under the trees, and on the benches.

Although I was impatient to get to the hotel, after so many coincidences I could not tell Henri that the odds of finding his father amongst the refugees along the roadside were fantastic. He kept darting hither and thither hopefully. By chance he had found his brother, by chance he had met me, by chance he might see his father among those huddled figures.

We dozed uneasily in the hotel and had to leave the lounge at five for it to be swept. Somehow we filled in the time until evening; we spent the day wandering around the ruins of the coliseum and Roman baths and temples, then back to the inevitable fight for a seat on the train. . . . Aching in every limb, we arrived in Vichy at six the next morning.

Darby and I sat in a café opposite the station, and left Henri to search for rooms. After two hours he returned having found a room which would not be vacant until the evening, and hoping to find one for himself during the day.

We all had much to see to; Henri went about his affairs, and we went our way, and Darby and I arranged with Henri that he should call at our hotel early the next morning.

Wondering what kind of reception we should receive, we

went first to the American Embassy; Dick Warner was very surprised to see us. We told him that not only had we returned to get more money from Huffer's bank, but now our exit permits had expired, and this time we wanted them *via* Cerbère and Port-Vendres, or Cerbère and Marseille. Dick Warner thought the Chef du Bureau de la Circulation would never make them out that way, but advised us to go around immediately and see what he would do.

On our way there we saw several German officers strolling along the streets—so they were filtering even into Vichy! Our permits became more urgent than ever.

The Chef du Bureau's secretary recognized us at once; she was sitting in a large room with desks along the whole length. She had thought we were well on our way home, and listened with deep concern to our tale of woe. We explained to her exactly how we wanted our exit permit made out and asked to have it valid for at least five weeks. She walked over to the Chef du Bureau's desk. I watched her pleading our cause with the Chef and saw him shake his head. It was another of those moments when our future seemed in the balance. I wondered whether to leave everything to the secretary, who, I knew, was doing her best for us, or if I should step in myself.

I found myself walking toward the Chef's desk. He looked up and recognized me. "What is it you want now?"

I took the bull by the horns. "Monsieur le Ministre, to begin with, I want our exit permit valid for five weeks."

He banged his hand down on the desk. "*C'est incroyable!*"

I continued hurriedly, "That is not all. We want our exit permits made out *via* Cerbère and Marseille or Carbère and Port-Vendres."

Momentarily he looked blank with surprise; again he banged upon his desk and said, "*C'est formidable!*"

I thought it best to try to say all I could before he refused to listen further. "We've already been to Cerbère, and you know the Spanish frontier is closed to the British, and it's imperative we leave France. Unless we have the option to leave *via* North Africa we may never get away, and we have very little money left."

"Neither have I," said the Chef du Bureau. "Much of my property is in England, and now England blocks the pound, and also bombs our cities."

"Well, Monsieur le Ministre, if your money is blocked in England you can realize how difficult it is for Mademoiselle Darby and me, and as for England bombing German occupied towns in France, unfortunately it is one of those things in war which are necessary."

The Chef du Bureau glared and shrugged his shoulders. I appeared to have made little headway. I remembered Mr. Bernard's masterly oration at Cerbère. Another oration seemed our only hope. I took a deep breath.

"Monsieur le Ministre, Mademoiselle Darby and I came to France to help with your refugees. We drove your wounded ... we have helped nurse them. We have been captured and imprisoned by the Germans.... Maréchal Pétain has thanked us for our work.... Surely, Monsieur le Ministre, before we become penniless you will help us to get home...."

The Chef fiddled with his pen and after a pause which seemed hours said, "*Mais alors*, now what is it exactly that you want?"

I quickly went over it again. "With the present political

situation an exit permit for eight days may be of little use, therefore to begin with we want ours for five weeks."

"But it is unheard of!" said the Chef du Bureau.

"But it is necessary, Monsieur le Ministre."

"For a month—that, perhaps, would be possible."

I saw I was making progress and did not want to lose ground, but I found that the Chef du Bureau was adamant on that point, and, since four weeks was such an advantage, I did not press it further.

"What else do you want?" he asked.

I again explained the difficulties of an exit permit made out for one town only.

"Well," said the Chef du Bureau, "give me your passports."

After glancing through them he turned over a fresh page and wrote away. He passed them on to a soldier sitting at a desk behind him who stamped them with a seal. The Chef handed them back to us and said, "*Au revoir, mademoiselles.* I hope this time you have a more successful journey."

Although we were longing to see what he had written, politeness prevented us from looking.

We thanked him, and it was all we could do to walk and not run out of the room. Once outside, to our amazement we found our exit permit valid for one month to leave France "by all ways," sea, land, or air, Algiers and Morocco included. This was stupendous—much more than we had ever dreamed of. Every port, every frontier town, every way, was now open to us in unoccupied France.

"Darby, if we don't get away this time we really deserve to be shot."

Darby agreed and said, "To think that we did it without even standing in a queue."

We returned to the American Embassy, and Bob Murphy was anxious to know how we had got on; as he looked at our passports he grinned all over his face. "Well, this should see you through."

We said good-by—the American Embassy had been quite a home from home.

We were so proud of our passports that we showed them to Huffer's bank manager, who was so impressed that he passed them around to his colleagues. Every one wished us the best of luck and said the sooner we got home the better.

When we left the bank Darby said, "You know, we are fools. Now we've done everything, we could catch this afternoon's train back to Marseille, if only we'd arranged some meeting place with Henri."

We felt too dirty and tired to look up any of our friends; we curled ourselves into a large sofa tucked away in the lounge of the Parc Majestic and stayed there until our room became vacant. Henri knocked on the door.

"*Venez vite*, Bessy, I have only five minutes."

I was dragged downstairs and across to the station. He explained the hurry; he had to catch this particular train to get his final demobilization papers. In five minutes on a crowded platform it was hopeless to make future plans. Henri said he would try his best to get to England, and, the last I saw of him, he was making another catlike jump for the hopelessly packed train.

Darby was in bed when I returned to the hotel; I told her Henri had dashed off, and I expected that was the last we should see of him for some time to come.

Three days later we left France. As we set out, my thoughts flashed back over past experiences. I was torn by conflicting

emotions–intense gladness for my own immediate safety; pain for the chaotic misery of the French people. I heard again the voice of their leader: "I regret that the relations between our two countries are at present a little strained, but there is no real animosity between us, and I hope it will not be long before we both know happier times."

Au revoir, belle France. En avant! Marchons vers ces heures plus heureuses. Au revoir et bonne chance.

A short stay in Lisbon–Imperial Airways soon gave us seats in one of their 'planes–London again. Everything at home looked exactly the same as when I had left.

I was delighted to hear that Angus and Heard had been safely evacuated from France with the B.E.F. Kruger was in charge of a new M.T.C. unit, and Angus, Heard, and Otto among others had gone with her to Kenya.

It had been impossible to communicate with Huffer while he was in Paris: I was glad when he wrote me a letter from New York dated January 13, 1941.

> Since I left Paris I cannot get news from my sister or my niece.... I suppose I should not complain, considering all the suffering which is going on in Great Britain, but I am sure you can appreciate how I feel.... I believe our Government is at last trying to do something for Great Britain, but for those who are interested it seems that we are really doing nothing. New York has been very gay, but wherever you go you are always held up for charity–Bundles for Britain is, I think, the biggest thing; they have over five hundred places where they give out wool for making socks and sweaters.
>
> Seven months ago to-day you were taken prisoner, and five months to-morrow we left [Paris] for Vichy; it seems only yesterday.

Vichy, Marseille, Cerbère, Port Bou, Perpignan, Marseille, Vichy, Lisbon, London. Together Darby and I celebrated the successful end of our journey.

It had been a terrifying journey, exciting in parts, but at times we had been so cut off, and felt so completely adrift, that it had been hard to believe we should get back.

Darby and I had been lucky—we were home. Now in England it is easy to think of it all as a great experience, a good yarn to tell, but it is impossible to forget the distress of those I knew in France and the misery and sadness of my fellow political prisoners, who are still suffering the hell which Darby and I escaped.

My friends of Cherche-Midi and Fresnes, I don't think of you often, for at the moment it all seems hopeless; but I have not forgotten you—far from it.

A bomb dropped and caused a large crater in the middle of our road; when I realized that no one was hurt I heard myself exclaiming with horror, "I suppose that means no gas to cook with, no hot water, and no baths."

I stopped: I thought of you.

When I heap my plate with food my thoughts return to you, and I have learned at least one thing—I can not bear waste.

Louise, my dear, we have heard that you are free! I shall always remember your advice, your kindliness, and your courage, and the pot of marmalade you gave Darby and me to share. God bless you.

No, Collette, I have not been near any prisons since I have been home, but I do not believe that such places as Cherche-Midi and Fresnes exist over here. I have not forgotten the French coffee and the grapes you gave me, nor the mark

which you slipped into my hand. I expect you will be kept as a hostage for the duration of the war, for I can not imagine you writing to your husband to ask him to return.

I suppose your sentence, Jeanne, will depend on what kind of a Kommandant tries your case.

You, Schiaparelli and *ma petite Parisienne*, must have finished your sentences by now; what is Paris like these days? Think "*sales Boches*" as often as you like, *ma petite*, but don't let it get back to them. And, Schiaparelli, don't tear down any more posters! I have not had any rum since I drained your bottle at Fresnes; *écoute, mon amie*, I couldn't be sorrier, but I have lost the flapjack you gave me.

My little Mouse, I think you will stick your two years.

To you, Marie, O Polish woman, I promise this much: I will try my best when we have won this war to trace you. Should you and thousands like you be no longer, at least your memory is dear to many, and we know that you must live on. . . .

(1)